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The Pulitzer Prize-winning icon of Vietnam War atrocity – one of photojournalism's decisive moments, a snapped shot seen around the world – now an aesthetic object in prehistoric dentine. Christopher Mooney looks at *Cri*, among other works by Adel Abdessemed, on the eve of a London show by the Paris-based artist

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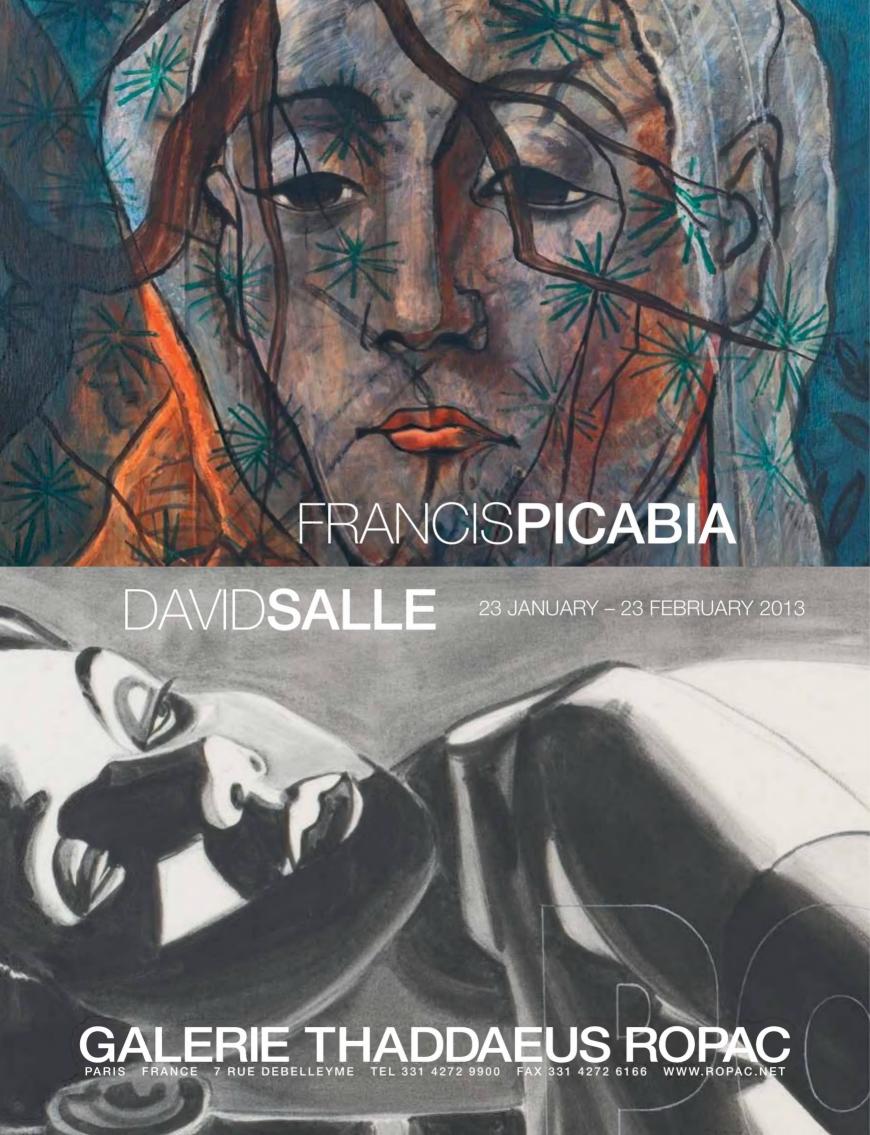


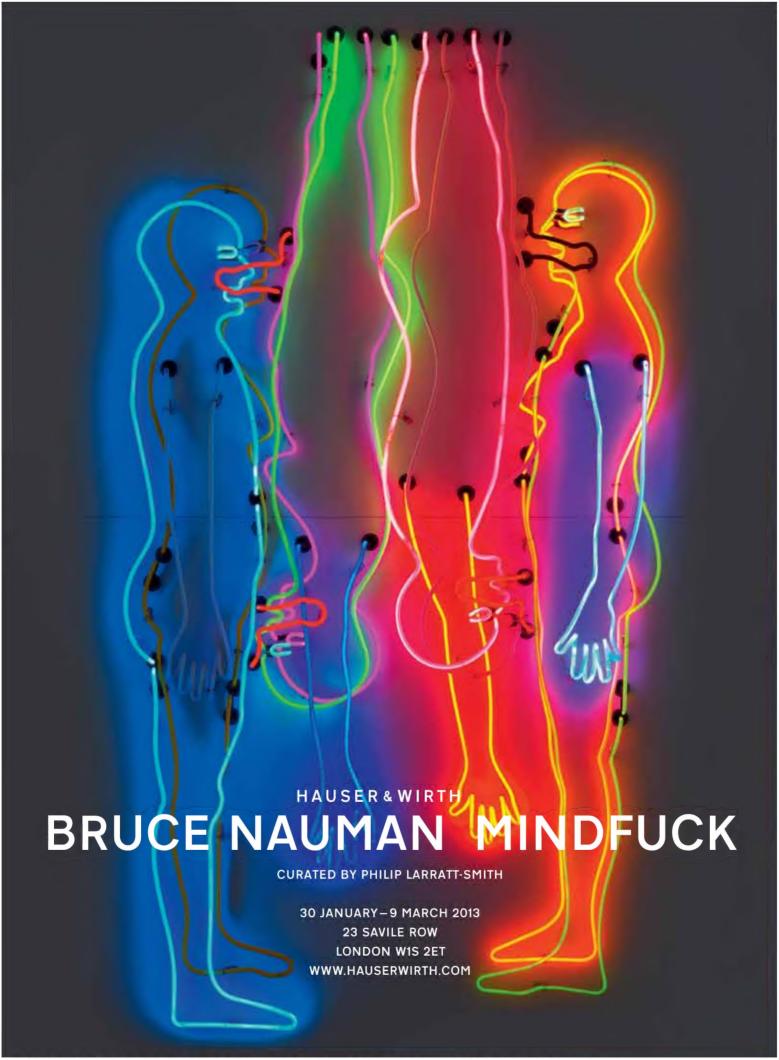






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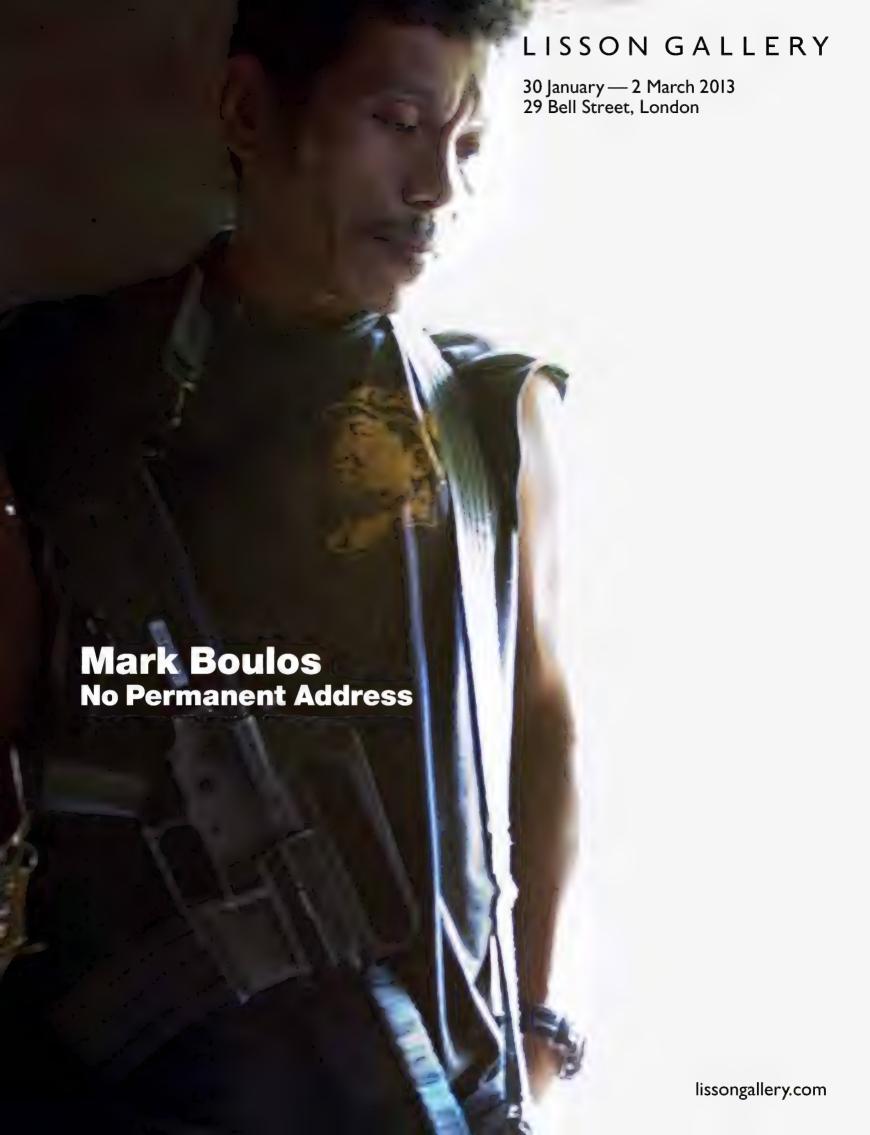
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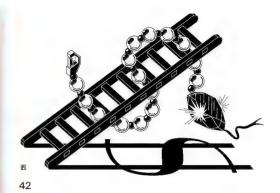
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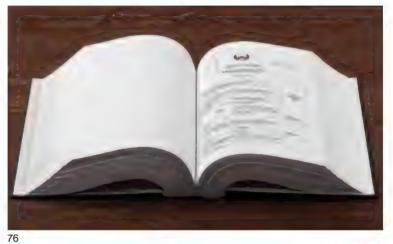














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The Office for the Dead, 2008, lead and stained glass on lead, six panels; $92 \frac{1}{2} \times 23 \frac{1}{6}$ " (235 x 60 cm) each, $92 \frac{1}{2} \times 141 \frac{1}{4}$ " (235 x 360 cm) overall

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On the cover Sarah Lucas photographed by Juergen Teller

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Contributors

Kimberly Bradley

is a Berlin-based writer and editor who covers art and culture for publications including Art Agenda, Monocle, WSJ Magazine and The New York Times. She also edits English-language copy for several German publications and institutions with 'kunst' in their titles (Haus der Kunst, Texte zur Kunst). In this issue she explores Berlin's Potsdamer Strasse area, the first in a series of three views on the city in ArtReview. For further reading, she recommends Distanz Verlag's Portfolio Berlin O2, which surveys the work of seven Berlinbased contemporary artists in images and essays, as well as Christopher Isherwood's classic The Berlin Stories (1945), whose plots play

out not far from Potsdamer Strasse, in Berlin's Schöneberg neighbourhood.

Chris Sharp

is a writer and independent curator based in Mexico City and Berlin. He is editor at large for *Kaleidoscope* magazine and a contributing editor of *ArtReview*. In this issue he **profiles** Abraham Cruzvillegas. For **further reading**, he recommends *Autoconstrucción: The Book* (2009) and the artist's recent contribution to Documenta 13's 100 Notes – 100 Thoughts series of publications.

Zarmeené Shah

is an independent curator and critic, currently based in Prague. She was recently appointed independent consultant for South Asian Art for the CCA Derry-Londonderry. Returning to Karachi with an MA in critical & curatorial studies from Columbia University in 2010, she lectured in contemporary art theory at the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture (IVS) and was chief curator of the IVS Gallery until May 2011. Focusing on contemporary art and continental and semiotic theory, she is particularly interested in new media art, the body and the political in art. In this issue she reviews Filip Cenek's solo exhibition at Hunt Kastner, Prague. For further reading, she recommends Martin Blažíček's essay 'Half-Spoken Understanding: The Method of Reading Filip Cenek's Work', published in the journal A2 (no 22, 2009).

Gesine Borcherdt

is an art historian. She has lived in Berlin since 1998 and is a former editor of *Monopol* and *Artnet Magazine*. She currently writes for *Die Welt* and *Welt am Sonntag*. In February she will curate *Die Gestundete Zeit (The Time Deferred*, a title taken from a poem by Ingeborg Bachmann) at Sies + Höke, Düsseldorf. In this issue she **reviews** Neïl Beloufa's solo show, *Documents Are Flat 4*, at Kunstraum Innsbruck. For **further reading** she recommends the catalogue for Okwui Enwezor's 2012 Paris

Triennial, a show Beloufa featured in.

Juergen Teller

is an artist. Woo, a retrospective exhibition of his work, is at the ICA, London, from 23 January. For this issue he has **photographed** Sarah Lucas.

Andrea Stappert

is a photographer. She was born in Duisburg, Germany, in 1958, and has made it her lifework to quietly observe and document the European artworld's most interesting personalities. She moved to Hamburg in 1979, where she studied painting with Sigmar Polke, among others, at the Academy of Fine Arts, before moving to Cologne in 1985. It was there that she began her photography career, with a series of portraits of artist Martin Kippenberger. Working with analogue cameras and using natural light and settings, Stappert has always focused on the artist portrait, a logical extension of her close collaboration - and friendships - with artists and other artworld figures. In 1998 Stappert moved to Berlin and has subsequently collaborated with a number of major art institutions in Germany and around the world. She currently lives and works in Berlin and New York. For this issue she has photographed the art scene around Potsdamer Strasse, Berlin.

Stewart Home

is an artist with recent solo shows at White Columns in New York and Space in London. He is also the author of two dozen books, a mixture of fiction and cultural commentary. His most recent novel is Mandy, Charlie & Mary-Jane (2013). Home was born and still lives in London. In this issue he reviews Medieval Modern: Art out of Time, by Alexander Nagel. For further reading he recommends Alfio Bernabei's review of Paul Furlong's Social and Political Thought of Julius Evola (2011), originally published in Searchlight magazine (November 2011), but reprinted on the whomakesthenazis. com blog; and Zeev Sternhell's The Birth of Fascist Ideology: From Cultural Rebellion to Political Revolution (1994).















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Beyond the Object

15 JANUARY / 9 MARCH 2013

Nazafarin Lotfi

Love at last sight

> ART LOS ANGELES CONTEMPORARY JANUARY 24-27 / 2013 > ART ROTTERDAM FEBRUARY 7-10 / 2013

Dictionary



walnut oil to wundercabinet

walnut oil (wahl-naht oy-il) Vegetable drying oil from the beneficent walnut tree, used as a painting medium.

war art (wohr ahrt) Three kinds of art in times of war may be defined: (1) art against the peace; (2) conventional art crimes (art inflicted upon civilian populations); (3) art against humanity. See Art Hate.

warm colours (wor-um cul-orz) Those colours in which beneficent reds and yellows are dominant.

water (wor-ta) At capitalist private views champagne is usually served freely, but basic water will cost £2 a bottle.

water feature (wor-ta fee-tuur) A category of environmental subject in architectural, garden and landscape design. A preeminent example is the Diana Memorial Fountain, London. Here the designer sought to reflect Princess Diana's life by directing a large volume of menstrual blood and uterine lining to cascade downwards in what many critics have described as a knowingly ironic reference to motorway drainage systems and their continuous runoff channels. The Diana conduits are covered with precast, slotted concrete slabs that, at intervals, are intercepted by catchpits and paved cutoff ditches that take the steaming human blood under the carriageways via culverts. See folly.

waxwork (wacks-wurk) A figure made of wax.

The plural form, used with either a singular or plural verb, refers to an exhibition of wax figures.

weapons (weh-pons) Historically, weapons were often so highly decorated as to be art objects. They are now in a locus separated objects locus category, costing nearly as much art. Weapons objects and art objects are in a conversational dialogue relationship of locus value significance with each other, each contributing to challenging meanings that may not occur under separated control conditions. See Art Hate.

whimsical (wim-sih-cahl) A fanciful, quaint taste. An avoidable cause of anal prolapse in artists today. Whimsical artists may not realise their anus trails along behind them when they walk.

whirligig See stasis, praxis.

white (why-tuh) Modernist colour, not known to have existed before 1910. It is at the extreme end of the brightness dimension along the white-grey-black continuum. In art, white may create an involuntary locus compulsion to separate the visual field into figure and ground; a physiological stimulus causing loss of differentiation and the temporary dissolution of a precise, stable picture plane. The resultant insubstantiality is an apparent blankness, thus inducing a dream perception. Reduced to this critical threshold, a meditative union occurs, leading to mystic orison and holy locus.

Whore of Babylon (hor ov babb-ee-lon) Painting theme. Allegorical personification of evil and decadence in the Book of Revelation (Rev 17:1–8). The Whore carries a golden cup which overflows with the filth of fornications and abominations

Winnicottian (wihn-ee-cot-ee-ahnn) Refers to Donald Winnicott, a British child psychiatrist and psychoanalyst. Winnicott devised the term 'transitional object' for any material object, such as a \$150 million painting, to which a child is emotionally attached. Such objects assist a move away from the oral relationship with the mother, towards a true object relations.

Wölfflin, Heinrich (vol-flinn, heyn-ritch) (1864–1945). Noted art historian.

women's studies (wim-mins stuh-deez)
Common historical-painting theme, in which overly dominant, apelike male creatures seek to view a female, who may be nude and bathing.
The female holds a style magazine whose representations of fabulous wealth objects are of interest to her. In contemporary art these relationships are challenged, the women being as apelike as the men, all of them bathing together in the filth of their fornications and abominations while studying the depicted wealth objects.

wormling (wurm-lihng) A little, beneficent worm.
worry (wur-ree) An important art-critical value.
Contemporary criticism is defined by wildly
irrational fear, which seeks fixity containment
by the diligent invention of locus problematics.

wound (woo-und) The historic narrative of the wound is its matching relationship with the injurious force that made it, whether physical, mental, social or economic. Such a trauma to the total unity of a person can only be solved by a hugely successful career in art.

wundercabinet (wun-dehr-kab-in-ett) A collected grouping of high-ranking curiosities (representing the government executive branch), a unicorn's horn and various locus taxidermicals.

NEAL BROWN

ART'S NEW WAVE:

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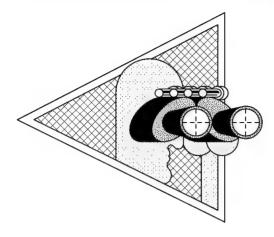
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Now See This



Ten exhibitions you don't want to miss in January and February

By Martin Herbert

Economy Centre for Contemporary Arts, Glasgow 26 January – 23 March

Juergen Teller Institute of Contemporary Arts, London 23 January – 17 March

Anders Clausen Christian Andersen, Copenhagen 11 January – 9 February

Mika Rottenberg Magasin 3, Stockholm 8 February – 2 June

Yin Xiuzhen Kunsthalle Düsseldorf to 10 March

Zhang Xiaogang Pace Beijing to 28 February

Jockum Nordström Lille Métropole 16 February – 19 May

Massimo Bartolini Frith Street, London 8 February – 28 March

Ei Anatsui Brooklyn Museum, New York 8 February – 4 August

Kochi-Muziris Biennale Kerala to 13 March



TRACEY EMIN
(see ECONOMY)
I've Got It All, 2000, c-print, 123 x 84 cm.

What kind of curatorial schema could accommodate Allan Sekula's photo-driven sociological analyses, Hito Steverl's diagnostic video essays and Tracey Emin's full-frontal oversharing? Economy does, thanks to its top-down view of capital as a force that, since communism fell, has rattled every metric of the self, impacting upon 'migration, labour, sexuality, the crisis of democracy... the quest for alternatives' and more. Foregrounding artistic practices in this widescreen vision, curators Angela Dimitrakaki and Kirsten Lloyd have spread their net wide: anticipate, courtesy of 17 entrants, art from Estonia, India, Finland, the US and beyond; a compound confirmation of Ralph Waldo Emerson's edict that 'money often costs too much'; and some very big, really expensive Andreas Gursky photographs.



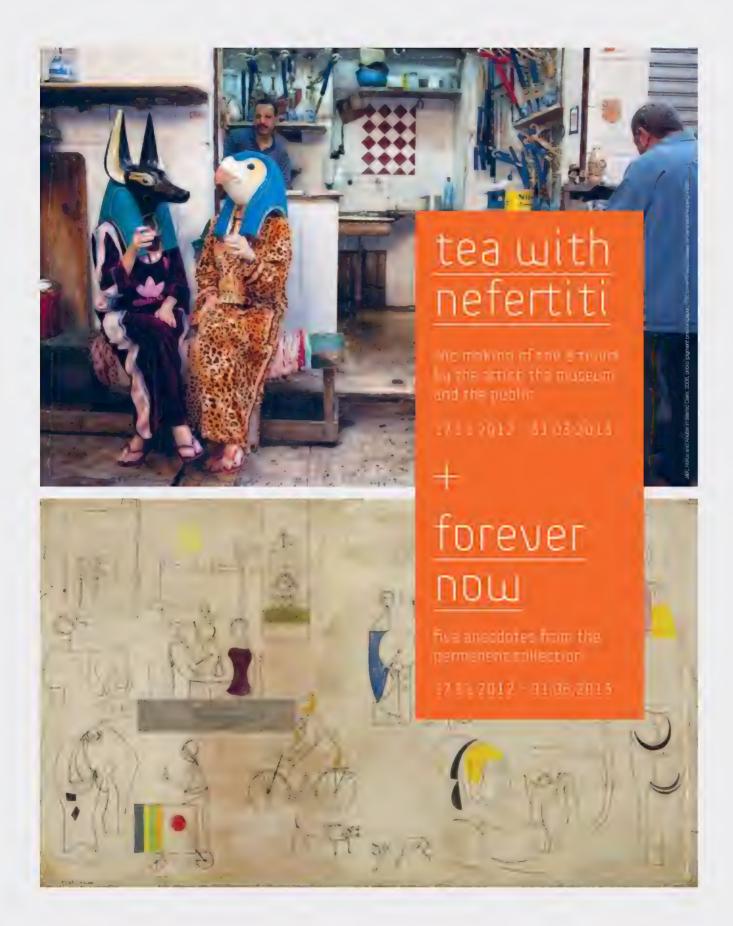
Speaking of photographers from Germany, the CCA's opposite number at the other end of the UK, London's Institute of Contemporary Arts, is giving Juergen Teller the retrospective treatment. Woo, says the title: be excited, be seduced and maybe also be amused. Nine years ago, for the out-on-the-tiles section of another art magazine's website, the present author attempted to precis a Teller opening by quoting a passing artist as saying (referring to the photographs), "We wondered how many times he'd get his cock out." That wasn't adequate then, in hindsight, and certainly isn't now, when it's clear that Teller has not only contributed to the generational erasure of boundary lines between art and whatever, but grown into an eloquent documenter of passage, whether in contrasting young and older models or tracking his own family's life.

JUERGEN TELLER
Ich bin Vierzig, London, 2004. Courtesy the artist

What does pictorial composition mean in a digital context? In a sense we're all constantly, if barely consciously, composing on our desktops: dragging icons, switching wallpapers, creating haphazard mashes of the visual and the verbal, of preinstalled icons and downloaded visual junk. Firstly, though, this is only debatably visual activity, and secondly our freedom is circumscribed by the fixed nature - so-called 'lock in' - of the digital tools. Danish artist Anders Clausen, via his large-scale prints made from screenshots, foregrounds both the potential creativity and the limitations of the desktopas-canvas via his aestheticised and skewed assemblies of clip art, regimented folders, text fragments, 'color picker' charts and, more recently, heavily glitched interfaces strafed by almost painterly clouds of digital static. It's a form of removed hypermodern collage that, uneasily, feels cocreditable to Clausen and to Apple's backroom artisans.



I Would Prefer Not To, 2012, inkjet on PVC, 245 x 150 cm. Courtesy the artist





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Mika Rottenberg's films frequently screened in environments, like handmade shacks or bogus minifarms, that could be pulled from them - are all backroom. They depict regimented sites of production staffed by extraordinary women obese, or bodybuilders, or porn stars or sporting outlandish fingernails engaged in relentless tasks. In her well-known Dough (2005-6), for example, featuring confined women making bread, a Heath Robinsonesque process sees a plus-size worker's tears falling on hot tile, making steam and causing the eponymous substance to rise before it is stretched by a 2m-plus woman,

who herself can stretch between multiple spaces in the 'bakery'. The blend of surreal humour, feminist impetus concerning exploitation and women's supposed roles, and countermanding demonstrations of female strength and endurance is typical of the Buenos Airesborn, Brooklyn-based artist, as this retrospective will doubtless demonstrate.

Industry's deleterious effects, both on people and on the environment, carry over into **Yin Xiuzhen**'s work: Washing the River (1995), a documented performance, involved Chinese citizens 'cleaning' dirty water frozen into blocks of ice



MIKA ROTTENBERG
Felicia from Tropical Breeze, 2004, c-print.
Courtesy Nicole Klagsbrun Gallery, New York and
Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York. © the artist

YIN XIUZHEN Thought, 2009, clothes and steel, 340 x 510 x 370 cm. Courtesy Pace Gallery, New York, London & Beijing

until it melted away; and the trickledown effect of large, not necessarily benign cultural shifts on the individual has been Yin's wheelhouse ever since. In the series Portable Cities (2000-12), she artfully converts clothes from inhabitants in places she visits into miniature model cities that sit in an open suitcase - the ideology of mobility and speed within which we live today is here allied to a reminder of China's massive textile industry and the imperfect working conditions within it. Here, in the artist's first major outing in Europe, numerous immersive, textile-based sculptural installations ought to foreground Yin's flair for using absurdity and labour in the services of poetic critique.

In China itself, the third edition of Pace Beijing's annual, local-art-oriented *Beijing Voice* event centres upon a show by **Zhang Xiaogang**, whose response to the country's transformation takes a very different form. His paintings of monochromatic parents and their red- and yellow-tinted single



ZHANG XIAOGANG
Big Woman and Little Man, 2012, oil on canvas,
140 x 220 cm. Courtesy Pace Gallery, New York,
London & Beiling 2012



children, of sad, childlike officers and of querulous bespectacled schoolgirls are misty, photo-derived, influenced by Gerhard Richter and Chuck Close and redolent of Chinese photographic portraiture of the 1950s and 60s. While connecting with the viewer, face-on, they radiate a sense of something half-lost, and this is where their humanism seemingly resides: in suggesting that what modern China needs is for a sense of mortal connectedness to be restored. If the symbolic language in his new paintings - flashlights suggesting hope, trees standing for 'Platonic idealism' - maybe need a little translating, the mood probably doesn't.

Jockum Nordström's paintings, drawings, watercolours and collages don't need much translation either. If there are some arcane references to Scandinavian folk art in there. the broad flavour communicates effectively enough; and the art's flashpoints - suburbia and soulless housing, sex, jazz, the rustic past if not quite adding up, suggest a pendulum swing of dull constraint and

OCKUM NORDSTRÖM

Jag Var en Dålig Hund, 2012, watercolour and graphite on paper, 142 x 112 cm. Photo: DR. Courtes: David Zwirner, New York & London, Galleri Magnu olm, and Zeno X Gallery, Antwert

escapism that neatly counterpoints the childlike facture. As for the spooky, who's-emulating-whom similarities between Nordström's art and that of fellow David Zwirner artist Marcel Dzama, that's a mystery for another day.

Last summer Massimo Bartolini installed an outdoor library, a procession of green-painted bookshelves, in a Ghent vineyard that dates back to the Middle Ages, with books donated by local libraries. It sent thoughts in multiple directions (where has the literary culture of Old Europe gone? What happens to the books when it rains? Whither the Jackie Collins section?), but was also keyed to the Italian artist's preference for relinquishing control. Previously,



MASSIMO BARTOLINI

Untitled (wave), 1997-2012 (Installation view nenta 13, 2012), fibreglass, motor, tainless stee rater, clay, barley, 850 x 500 x 130 cm. Courtesy the artist and Frith Street Gallery, Londo

Bartolini has set up a device on the heel of a visitor's shoe to alter the lighting in the exhibition space; other works have employed the drifting format of scent, or a carousel bouncing nondescript but intriguing video projections rootlessly around the gallery's walls. If what he's doing for Frith Street this time isn't yet fixed (beyond the show being entitled *Afterheart*), it probably still won't be when the exhibition is up.

Instability ripples through El Anatsui's art, too, for all its monumentality. At the Brooklyn Museum, in the Ghanaian-born artist's first solo show in a New York museum, some 30 works include a selection of his signature glimmering wall pieces made using countless bottle caps - from a distillery in Nsukka, Nigeria, where he lives - twisting the languages of Postminimalism, Arte Povera and traditional Ghanaian art into something that speaks of makedo-and-mend, sheer aesthetic verve and transformation through migration, since the works recompose differently in every venue they arrive at.

In Kerala, meanwhile, the inevitable has happened: India has launched its first biennial, with 80 participants - a 50/50 split of Indian and non-Indian artists - ranging from Ernesto Neto (fittingly, given his aromatic art, since part of the biennial is held in spice warehouses, reflecting a key Kerala trade) to filmmaker Amar Kanwar to outspoken musician M.I.A. There've been rumblings about a lack of transparency vis-à-vis the funding, and while there has been a lot of support, there's also a fusty local mindset to overcome. As artist Balan Nambiar scathingly puts it

in *The Hindu*, 'The proponents of conservatism in Kerala are living like frogs in a well while the few so-called modernists are like "one-eyed kings in the kingdom of the blind".' Ouch. But the organisers' plan, it seems, is for the **Kochi-Muziris Biennale** to be the next Venice Biennale: watch this space.



EL ANATSUI Drainpipe, 2010 (installation view, Akron Art Museum 2012), Itin and copper wire, dimensions variable. Photo



SUDARSHAN SHETTY (see KOCHI-MUZIRIS BIENNALE) Untitled, teak wood, 2010. Courtesy the artist and Galerie Daniel Templon, Paris

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William Scott *Still Life with Orange Note* 1970 (detail) Collection Ulster Museum, National Museums Northern Ireland © The estate of William Scott

Michael Joaquin Grey Orange between orange and Orange 11 January - 16 February 2013 Carroll / Fletcher 56-57 Eastcastle Street John Akomfrah / Michael Joaquin Grey / Natascha Sadr Haghighian / Eva and Franco Mattes London W1W 8EQ aka 0100101110101101.ORG / Manfred Mohr / Thomson & Craighead / UBERMORGEN.COM / www.carrollfletcher.com Eulalia Valldosera / Richard T. Walker / John Wood and Paul Harrison

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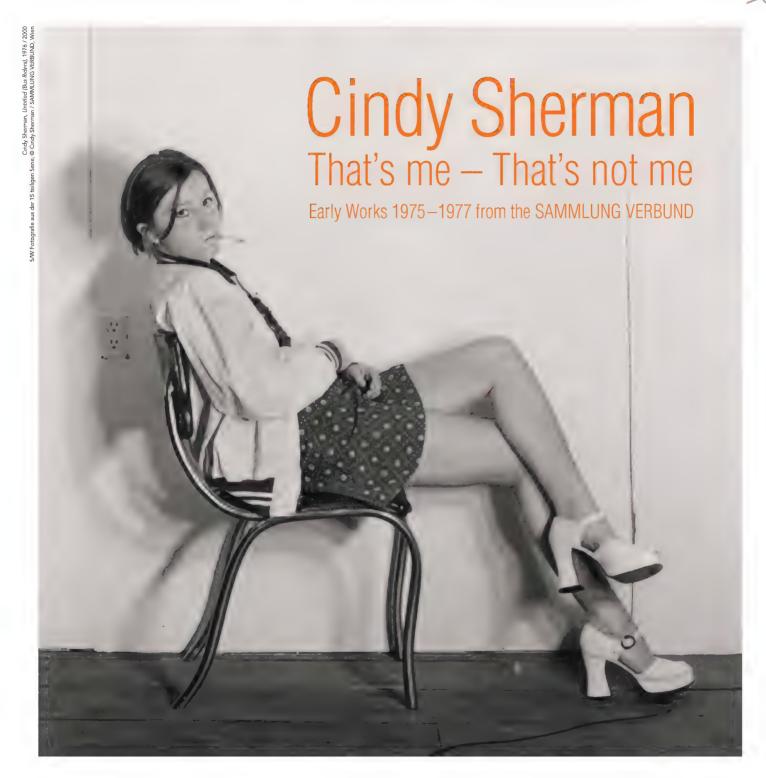
Mariko Mori Rebirth

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Wantko Mori, job Na Hite Fig 2006 Glass, stainless stee LEE control system 450 x 156 3 x 74 _ s Courtesy of Mariko Mori Site ⊆ Manko Mori Photo Richar J Ley



Exhibitions

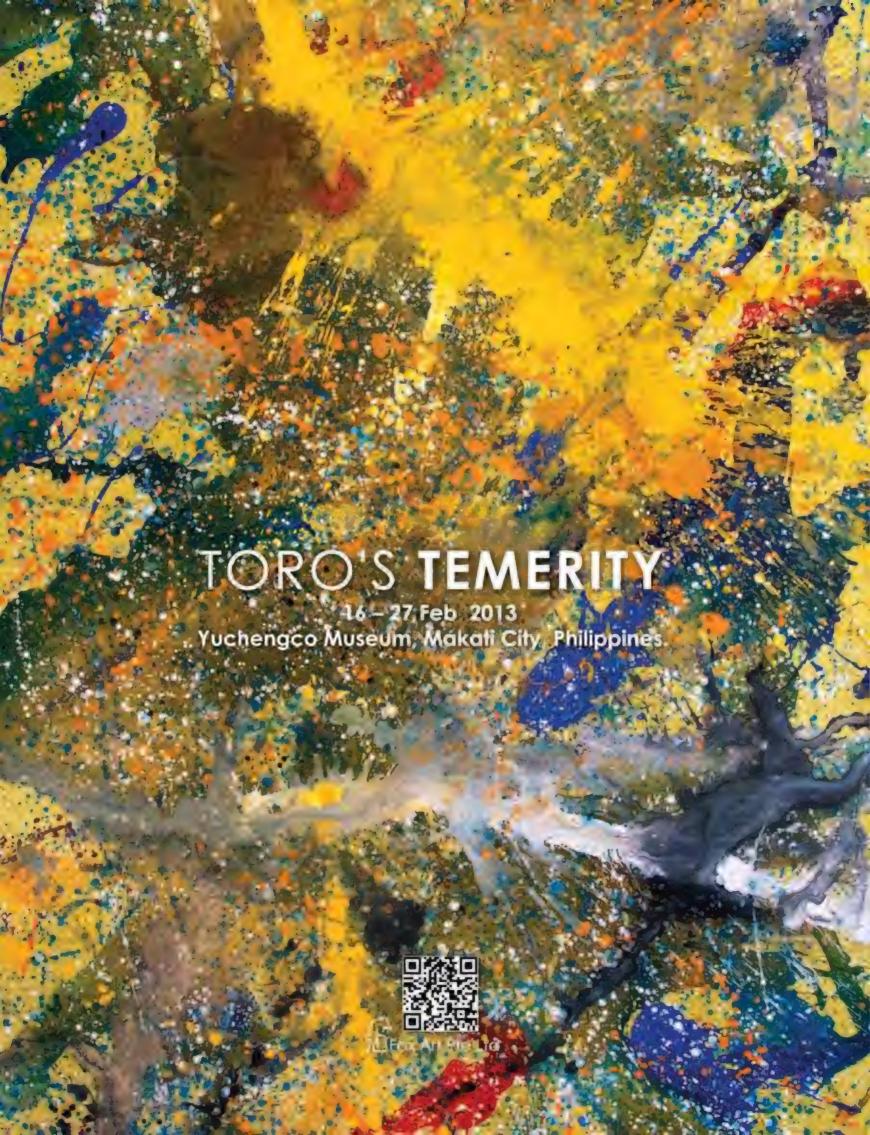
Centre de la photographie Genève, Switzerland December 5, 2012 – January 13, 2013 www.centrephotogeneve.ch Merano Arte, Italy January 31 – May 26, 2013 www.kunstmeranoarte.org

Catalogue Raisonné

Gabriele Schor, director of SAMMLUNG VERBUND in Vienna, spent three years in close collaboration with Cindy Sherman researching the artist's conceptual beginnings. The book has been published in 2012.

www.verbund.com/sammlung





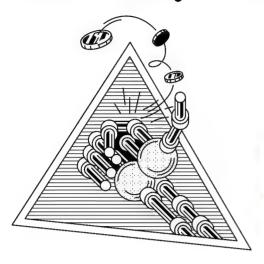
Juergen Teller



Woo



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National anthems

North Sea Scrolls is an odd collaboration between musicians Cathal Coughlan, Luke Haines (of the Auteurs and Black Box Recorder fame) and the writer and critic Andrew Mueller. As stage show and 15-track album, mixing spoken word and music, it tells an alternate history of the British Isles as revealed in scrolls (discovered, apparently, by Sweeney actor Tony Allen in East Anglian marshland): one in which Oswald Mosley is prime minister and England is divided into just two counties, Northshire and Southshire. It's a genius bit of concept album wizardry, mining British popular Dadaism from Bruce Lacey to Vivian Stanshall via Hawkwind.

lukehaines.co.uk

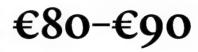
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Since 2009 XYM - initiated by artists Marlie Mul and Yngve Holen - has been commissioning artists to produce a PDF project with a maximum file size of 25MB, each available to download from the XYM website for a limited time. The results, made by the likes of Nicolas Ceccaldi & Morag Keil, AIDS-3D and Kilian Rüthemann, have ranged from a series of drawings to narrative-based texts and images. All the projects have now been collected on a set of memory-stick-cum-sculptures, exhibited at London's Arcadia Missa gallery earlier this year and now available for purchase.

xym.no





One last song

Just along the Holloway Road in north London – a few doors down from where the British black separatist movement had its headquarters in the 1960s, and across from the leather shop above which record producer Joe Meek lived – is the divey Peoples nightclub. That's where Jeremy Deller photographed this tacked up note to the club's DJs, which he's now produced as an edition of 100.

gavinbrown.biz

\$800



Seeing the light

Last year saw product designers Edward Barber and Jay Osgerby come to wider attention for their design of the Olympic torch, and this May they will be handed the curatorial reins at the Design Museum to stage a group show on the theme of making. During Art Basel Miami Beach in December they also contributed this lamp to Objets Nomades, a limited-edition collection of travel accessories by Louis Vuitton.

louisvuitton.com

£2,150



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Sneaker modernist



My space or yours

Artists Space's annual edition portfolio is always worth a look. Each year the New York nonprofit gallery gathers half a dozen artists, five of whom will make prints and one of whom will be given the job of making a box to house them in. This year, packaged in a design by Karl Holmqvist, are works from Angela Bulloch, Klara Lidén, Nick Mauss, Collier Schorr and Richard Hawkins (his work pictured), all in an edition of 100.

artistsspace.org

\$1,500

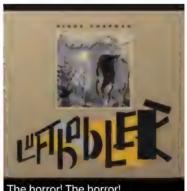
As we were going to press Oscar Niemeyer died, age one hundred and four. It's odd then to mark the genius behind Brasília, São Paulo's Ibirapuera Park (where he designed various pavilions, including the Museu de Arte Moderna and the Ibirapuera Auditorium, with its iconic tonguelike canopy) and countless other buildings throughout Brazil and beyond, with a range of sneakers. But like everything the great man laid his hands on, this collection for Converse Brazil is full of sensual charm, the slow undulating cut characteristic of Niemeyer's love of the curve.

converseallstar.com.br

\$85-\$135



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The horror! The horror!

You might not like to dwell on what happens in the basement of Dinos Chapman's flat. Here be dragons, one presumes. Actually not, as it turns out; there's just a recording studio, in which the artist has been tinkering away, making this 13-track electronic album, titled Luftbobler, 300 copies of which come in a hand-tippedcolour etched sleeve. This musical foray was inspired by 'insomnia, horror movies and boredom' apparently.

thevinylfactory.com

£300

The artist Jeremy Hutchison has taken a new guise - that of goods manufacturer. There's a catch, however: in a neat comment on global capital, none of the products in his Erratum series (2012), produced in small runs and which range from combs to clothes hangers and cheese graters (pictured), actually work. Hutchison outsourced production to various factories in China, asking them to create the items with a fault that renders them useless, much to the apparent bemusement of the firms' chiefs.

paradiserow.com

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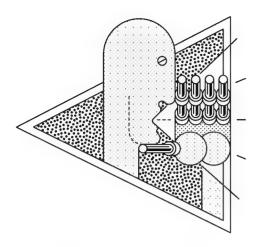






Centro de Convenciones Norte Halls 8 & 10 at Feria de Madrid Madrid, Spain

Now Hear This



The magazine's correspondents speak their mind

Mike Watson, Rome What is art for?

Sam Jacob, design Objects make the man

Astrid Mania, Berlin Who's setting the art agenda?

Marie Darrieussecq, Paris The taste of insects

J.J. Charlesworth, London

Market value and critical value way out of whack?

So what?

Jonathan Grossmalerman, New York Raft of Romney

Oliver Basciano, London Off-Space no. 10: OUTPOST

Joshua Mack, New York After the Flood

Paul Gravett, comics Let Me Feel Your Finger First



In 2011, the year prior to Pio Baldi exiting his position as president of Rome's MAXXI - the National Museum of the 21st Century Arts -80 percent of the museum's expenditure was sourced privately; as vivid an illustration as any that the arts in Italy cannot survive without ticket sales, sponsors and wealthy donors. When I asked Turin's mayor, Piero Fassino, during last year's Artissima art fair why arts expenditure had been slashed at the local level contrary to his pledge in 2011 to maintain funding levels even during the financial crisis - his answer was pragmatic: when he had made his promise (during a press conference for international journalists at the mayor's office), the intention had been to maintain total funding levels from across private and public sources. This, Fassino argued, had been achieved. Though, of course, when a leftwing politician - Fassino is with the centre-left Democratic Party and entered political life with the Communist Party of Italy promises to maintain funding at a certain level, it is usually taken to mean public funding. Can it be claimed that replacing public funding for the arts with private funding is a straight swap? Surely the net result of decreased state/council funding and increased private funding could have an effect on artistic content, just as the corporatisation of university education is shaping the subjects that are taught within universities.

With this in mind, it is worthwhile taking time to question art's relation to the debate of public vs. private funding. Where should art place itself in relation to a Europe-wide (largely rightwing) governmental consensus that has all but destroyed a deeply entrenched political commitment towards state provision for welfare, education and culture? For while the contemporary art world has enjoyed a heightened dalliance with political issues during the last two to three years, it is remarkably short on initiatives that question the fundamental relationship between art and power. Consequently, for all the apparently genuine sentiments that may have underpinned a seeming commitment to address political issues via the arts in recent years, a simple shift in focus towards concerns such as Minimalism, colour and painting for painting's sake would expose the shallowness of such intentions quicker than one could shout "Free Pussy Riot!"

This, indeed - if Artissima 2012 is an accurate representation of the market as a whole - seems to be precisely the position we're in. Minimalism and colour were very present at the main fair this year. Political statements were conspicuous by their absence. 'Social' or 'political' art, while present in all eras, chimes particularly with a world stricken by economic crisis, appalled by the foreign policy of the UK, the US and its allies, and inspired by the Arab Spring. Yet with no clear end to the economic crisis, the Arab world on the brink and the memory of the Iraq War continuing to haunt, as Iran pursues its nuclear programme, political art has become akin to a shrill and ineffectual steward shouting "Brace!" on an aeroplane that continues a long freefall with no final impact in sight.

Perhaps it is no surprise that we are witnessing a shift in focus. There are arguably two poles that have characterised the debate on art and politics since the Second World War: art as a form of political praxis at one extreme, and art as a purely aesthetic consideration – and containing a political intent in its refusal to engage concretely with society – at the other. Neither argument gains a strong foothold, perhaps because any success that art might have in convincingly entering the political realm either overtly or by its refusal

Stone chopping tool from the Olduvai Gorge in Tanzania. Courtesy Trustees of the British Museum, London

to participate in politics (its aloofness giving it a critical capacity) thereby subjects it to the requirement that it provide convincing political solutions. And they are hard to come by. Looked at like this, the level of overall abstraction in the debate surrounding the political capacity of art transforms it, to all appearances, into a game of sophism, which is harmful for two reasons. Firstly, such sophism diverts huge energies and resources that might otherwise engage more concretely in finding political solutions. Secondly, where the artworld does engage concretely with society, it does so mostly uncritically. 'Take the money and run' is the prevailing motto in this field, through periods of prosperity and of crisis. whether we drape ourselves in the red flag or not.





Walking through London, it's easy to forget that a city is just a particular arrangement of stuff - hundreds and billions of things - some static, some in motion, others loosely assembled into a London-shaped superthing. Cataloguing every object would mean counting every chair, plate and book, every shoe and shoelace, every single item in every supermarket and so on. And most of the things we see around us are themselves assemblages that atomise into countless other components; cataloguing them would require noting not just every building, but also every brick, screw and plank that went into it. Absolutely every thing. It's mindboggling even to imagine the formula we would use to estimate that number.

There is apparently over 170,000kg of manmade material on the moon and 300 million pieces of manmade space debris orbiting the earth. Imagine then the number of things accumulated in a city ranged over two millennia and 1,570km² of administrative area.

And then factor in that we're adding more and more, faster and faster, to this already countless total.

Tourists visiting Florence sometimes suffer from Stendhal syndrome – rapid heartbeat, dizziness, fainting, confusion and even hallucinations – as a result of being overwhelmed by the quantity and beauty of the city's Renaissance artefacts. But spend too long measuring the quantities of even the most unremarkable stuff that surrounds us and it can bring on similar psychosomatic symptoms.

That's why I'm heading through the giant Doric portals of the British Museum (an institution that itself holds around 6m objects – a number not including, I suppose, inventories of the gift shop, cafés, display cases, pencils, maps, uniforms and, presumably, a ton of archaeologyand conservation-related tools). I'm here to try and kick my 'stuff' syndrome.

In an unprepossessing corner of the museum is the oldest object in London: a stone tool found in the bottom layer of deposits in Olduvai Gorge, Tanzania, where the remains of an early human camp had been preserved. Potassium-argon dating suggests the tool dates from 1.8m years ago.

These days it lives in a glass case, held in place by a metallic retort

stand as through it were floating in space. As we orbit around it, the stone's metamorphic crystals glint under a grid of lights above. Without any other object to measure it against, it might well be taken for a gigantic asteroid. And in some ways it does come from another world, a world before manufactured objects.

That's because it takes a while to perceive the human intervention that transformed it from a geological artefact into a human 'thing'. But there that intervention is: a craggy sharp ridge running along one side. Formed, the museum tells us, by flaking chunks off this stone with another. As the edge emerged, the stone metamorphosed. First, it became a tool; a thing to slice, dice and shred other matter. But it was also transformed conceptually: as flakes of the stone were chipped off, the idea of its manmade 'thingness' emerged. From this moment, or similar moments in other early human camps, is born a concept of 'stuff' that has been handed down to us. All those things out there in London are distant descendants of this stone thing.

It seems impossible to imagine a world before objects, to picture life before things began to litter the surface of the earth. All the material substance of the world was, before the idea of things emerged, arranged by cosmology, geography, climate, chemistry and biology. Unharvested, it was not yet transformed by human imagination into any other conceptual state: a tree was just a tree, a rock simply a rock. Even animals and human beings were no more than the constituent parts of an ecosystem.

Indeed, you could argue that it is manufactured objects themselves that leveraged humans out of this circumstance. The invention of things redrew the relationship between humanity and nature, transformed humans-as-creatures into cultural beings. We might suggest then that it was objects that made us human just as much as it was humans that made such objects. And if objects make us human, imagine the endless varieties of humanity that objects could manufacture.

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Painting in the 80s, curated by Albert Oehlen; Michael Buthe; Heinz Mack; Joachim Bandau... these are venerable names, elder statesmen of German art. Does this read like a museum's exhibition schedule? Sure does. Yet this is just a small selection of current and recent shows in Berlin's commercial galleries. And it provides a spotlight on the interplay between the public and private sectors in Berlin.

When, not so very long ago, the first young galleries opened up in Mitte and the gaps within Berlin's institutional landscape were just as wide as those in the cityscape itself, many dealerships looked more like zones independent of experimentation. It was hard to decide whether you were visiting one of the many artist-run spaces (where did they go, by the way?), a temporary venture in artistic self-promotion or a commercial enterprise. A nowestablished generation of Berlin artists lived it up in these galleries.

Much has changed since. Today, the city and its mayor celebrate the young, hip, 'based in Berlin' artist, and we're expecting a successor to that eponymous, multi-institution 2011 show this year. And nowadays it is hard – and this is not only true for Berlin – to decide whether you are visiting a public institution or a commercial gallery. Many museums look like the sidekick or showroom of their powerful-dealer mate. Dramatic budget cuts, museum directors hired not for their art-historical track record



but for their excellent fundraising, shoulder-rubbing and eventorganising skills: all these change the face of the public institution. Everything has to be so now, so wow.

And the dealers? Some discover history. Most recent history, that is. Matthias Arndt, for instance, currently houses a Heinz Mack retrospective. Surely there is no social or educational agenda here. The art market is rediscovering a taste for Zero, the artist group cofounded by Mack. At the same time, Sprüth Magers has offered a platform for Albert Oehlen's perspective on painting during the 1980s that, through his eyes, wasn't so German, oily or 80s after all. (Admittedly, Oehlen's notion of both the medium and the decade is rather flexible: the dates, and media, are all over the place.)

Elsewhere, dealer Thomas Flor - recently relocated from Düsseldorf - has proved to be a passionate supporter of Michael Buthe's material paintings and wonderful methodical madness. And Thomas Fischer, who last spring landed a coup with Brian O'Doherty's early works, lately featured Joachim Bandau, a Rhineland hero, and his uncanny machinelike creatures from the 1970s. It shouldn't be long before the public institutions fall for their brand of retro-chic. If the art market responds well to the art of the 'Best Agers' (as the fifty-plus generation is called in German PR speech), museum curators will surely follow. Courtesy of the galleries.

Marie Darrieussecq, Paris
The taste of insects

Grazia Nicosia is a conservation curator. One of her subjects is the struggle against art-loving insects. In France she has led a fascinating investigation, to which 121 institutions – from archaeology to archives, passing by way of industrial heritage – have responded.

Her study revealed a palette of insect tastes. The *Anthrenus verbasci* (better known as the carpet beetle; 200 eggs per female) and the *Tineola*

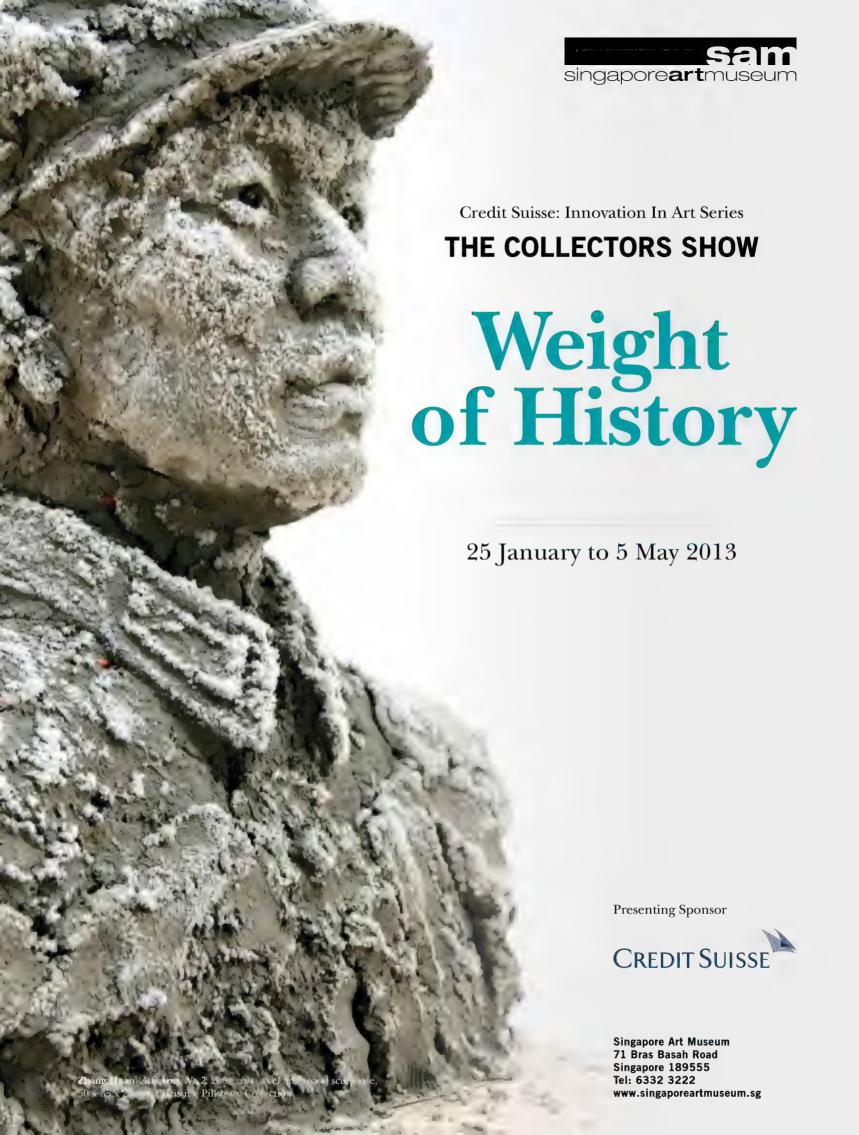
bisselliella (common clothes moth; 50 eggs per female) like natural-science collections. The Xestobium rufovillosum (deathwatch beetle) has 'a penchant for the fine arts'. Other artivores include termites, silverfish, Lasioderma serricorne (tobacco beetle) and various ptinidae.

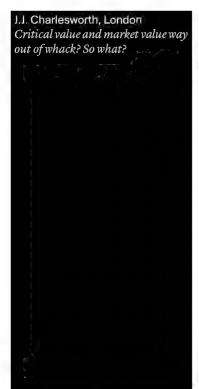
But collections of contemporary art are the most attacked. Maurizio Cattelan, Annette Messager, Mark Dion, Huang Yong Ping and Damien Hirst are the prey of choice, thanks to their frequent use of natural ingredients. The Stegobium paniceum (drugstore beetle) is especially interested. The larvae of this little brown beetle will, effectively, eat anything: animals in nature; arthropods, living or dead; leather; textiles; canvas glue; plants; paper; wood. Bread (Raymond Waydelich), chocolate (Dieter Roth) and poo (courtesy of the formidable Gérard Gasiorowski) are also on the menu.

Jan Fabre is particularly exposed, thanks to his use of dried insects. During his For Intérieur (2005) exhibition, Nicosia observed that his works 'made up of beetle carcasses were infested with necrophagous insects [...] and for the most part pierced with larval exit holes, with the casings of Anthrenus carpet beetles scattered over the works' stands'.

Nicosia cites Buffon, who was, from 1763, adviser for the Royal entomological collection: 'Dried-out pieces require even greater care; the insects that are born in them and that find their food there destroy them from within unseen; there are worms, beetles, ringworm, moths, mites, etc [...] their numbers will become prodigious if one does not employ different means to destroy them.' Nicosia recommends a combination of physical and chemical actions, basing her study on a selection of essential oils with repelling properties and on the application of microencapsulated insecticides.

But the artists themselves often see the evolution of the work as an integral part. Fabrice Hyber's Douche de Jus de Fleurs (2012), installed for three months as part of his Matières Premières exhibition at the Palais de Tokyo, exuded in its final moments dribbles and odours of a power one would not have suspected possible from a bunch of carnations. When I visited, a fly (just one) made up part of the audience - or perhaps the work. Oleg Kulik, whose Tolstoy and the Chickens (1998) is kept at FRAC Pays de Loire, has asked that the fowl droppings that come and go on the statue of the Russian artist not be cleaned up. The curators must thus deal with infestations and infections themselves - something that rather flies in the face of contemporary aseptic mores. And which keeps them as busy as bees.





The extreme mix of art and money that makes up a large part of the artworld has few defenders at the moment. After all, how can the values of art – which is supposed to be something good, exemplary or at least disruptive in a positive way – have got so entangled with the values of money, with the apparently ever-

more-venal culture of ostentatious luxury and financial chicanery that now seems to be the main driver of the international market for art?

Denunciations of the current state of affairs are now regular occurrences. In October, the lauded American critic Dave Hickey declared in comments to the UK's Observer newspaper that he was retiring from writing regular art criticism, having become disillusioned with the incursion of lazy collectors and their armies of art advisers: "They're in the hedge fund business, so they drop their windfall profits into art. It's just not serious," Hickey told the British newspaper. "Art editors and critics people like me - have become a courtier class. All we do is wander around the palace and advise very rich people. It's not worth my time."

Meanwhile, in the autumn 2012 issue of Francesco Bonami's very cool *Tar* magazine, you could find the not-much-lauded (but somehow listened-to) British art-market commentator Sarah Thornton declaring that she was giving up on writing about the market, listing her top ten reasons why. Thornton's complaints range variously from the commonsense to the banal: look, the

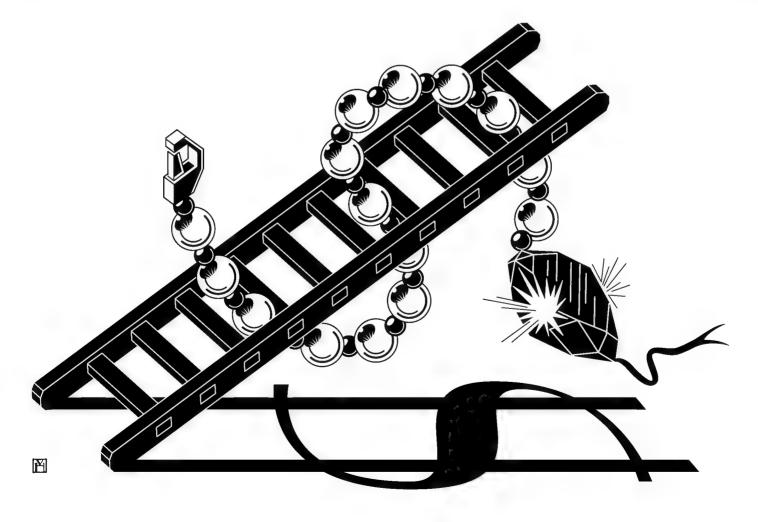
art market gives too much exposure to artists who achieve high prices at auction; hev, the market is easy to manipulate by the unscrupulous; and, er, the pay for being a writer is appalling. These are fairly lazy arguments to make, but Thornton's musings get a bit more interesting on a couple of her odder points. At number five on the list is the fact that 'oligarchs and dictators are not cool'. although Thornton is quick to insist that she has 'no problem with rich people', pointing out that 'some of my best friends are high net worth individuals'. (It's not the money, you see, but the way you carry yourself that's important.) And as well as uncool rich people, what Thornton really hates is how collectors manipulate the critical reputation of artists by bidding up their work (Urs Fischer's Untitled (Standing), 2010, sold for \$1.3m, is her example), while a work by an artist she does like (Sherrie Levine's Fountain (After Marcel Duchamp), 1991) 'doesn't even crack a million'.

But Thornton's complaints that the artworld is no longer 'cool' because it's led by the big money of uncool oligarchs, and that critical value should dictate market value yet

doesn't, are ones shared by Hickey. And the parallel is worth noting. Even if Hickey is way more cool when he argues essentially the same thing. In an interview on the US blog Gallerist NY that anticipated his comments in The Observer. Hickey declared that what he missed about the artworld was 'being an elitist and not having to talk to idiots': while on critical value and market value. Hickey was typically succinct: 'Most of my writing is market-driven. I have this old-time notion that there should be some equity between price and value. If I think somebody is underpriced, I try to raise their prices. If I think somebody is overpriced, I try to lower their prices.'

But why should art's critical value ever be authentically represented by its market value? Thornton wants to get back to a situation where critical seriousness is taken seriously by collectors, while Hickey's moist-eyed vision of a golden age of the artworld, the days in which 'we were all just freelance adventurers and we used to hang out', and market prices were the product of critical gut-instincts, is as nostalgic as it is utopian.

The reality, and how to respond to it, is going to be more complicated.



Because the global art market is now almost schizophrenically distorted by the tidal washes of liquid capital looking to get itself out of cash and into another safe haven, and increasingly extreme displays of chest-beating by status-conscious uncool global oligarchs. In such a situation, there's no possibility of an easy consensus between critical value and market value.

But if we were to push the point, we'd ask: why should criticism ever worry about the longevity of the critical (and thus market) value of an artist's work? That's the job of art historians, museum curators, biennial directors and the other bureaucrats tasked with running an artworld based on certainty and authority rather than on open enquiry, conflict and doubt. So on this point, art criticism should borrow from the language of the market: critical values can go down as well as up, and you may get back less than your original investment.



I happen to live in a fashionable section of New York called Tribeca. It's in flood evacuation zone A. So when Superstorm Sandy began rattling its sabres and conjuring its ugly winds, I decided to leave the city and its clamouring hordes of desperate, unprepared zombies and retire to my beach estate in Amagansett. That's in the Hamptons. You may have heard of it. It's nice. I like to escape there when things get intense. God's own green acre. Unfortunately (and unbeknownst to me at the time) it also happens to be situated in flood evacuation zone A-plus. Neither my ten-year-old daughter nor any of my staff would join me, and to be fair I may not have asked outright, hoping my eyes would relay my intent. So much of my conversation is done with my eyes and sometimes I confuse what I'm saying with what I'm... you know... looking. Regardless, I'm sure I meant to ask them. Let's just leave it at that.

I stocked the car with necessities: a case of vodka, two six-packs of Dr Pepper and a bag of excellent croissants I had picked up on impulse. Heading east, I had the Long Island Expressway to myself. Only the glare of oncoming traffic and the odd lone policeman waving his hands and imploring me to "for God's sake, go inland!" to contend with. You see, by my logic a single house at the end of a long driveway would be totally ignored by Sandy as she concentrated on the more populated areas in order to maximise damage. This turned out to be incorrect. Apparently it's wrong to assign motives to a superstorm. Upon arrival I couldn't help but notice that the wind had really picked up and the tide was extremely robust. I had only just brought the croissants and Dr Pepper inside when a large tree, perhaps an ash or an elm, fell on an electric line, cutting all my power and, through a series of events that can only be called coincidental, causing



my car to explode. With all the vodka in it. And it didn't just explode, it exploded a lot. Horrified, I'd just run out to see if anything could be retrieved when a towering oak fell directly onto my Cape Cod-style house with cedar shingles, crushing it completely and leaving only my spacious painting studio. In a panic I took refuge there, my only company the official presidential portrait of Mitt Romney I had been commissioned to paint, never to be seen. (They hadn't even called about it. It's as though they didn't care. What's that about!?) I'll be honest, as the studio groaned and black water swelled around me, I began to feel a bit sorry for myself. But then, as though pulled from the swirling brine... an idea!

When I came to, secured to the back of the overturned portrait by packing tape and clutching my favourite coffee mug, I was floating in the Hudson somewhere in the mid-20s. The tide had somehow brought me in and I could see, on the distant Chelsea shore, gallerists and their assistants clutching damp multimedia works, taking insurance photographs and weeping. My voice was too hoarse to cry out, but perhaps I communicated with my eyes or maybe one of them just saw me (we are a visual people), and soon a human chain of artists, gallerists, curators and art consultants had made their way out to me and brought me ashore. The stabbing warmth of each "Don't worry! We got ya!" and "You're going to make it, buddy!"

would play over and over again in the days ahead. I am a sentimental man by nature. I often think about how that painting saved me in a way that no installation, video or photograph ever could have. Well, perhaps a sculpture could have saved me provided it was made out of wood or was a sculpture depicting a boat made with the appropriate material. But a photograph? A video? An installation? I mean, maybe if there was a boat in the installation, but otherwise certainly not. Ultimately, it's possible that that is why they aren't really art. Along with all the other reasons. Anyway, it's something I've been thinking about.

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'Artist-run spaces', 'off-spaces': somewhere in their hazy definition is an acknowledgement that they operate as an alternative model to the mainstream commercial or institutional artworld. It is hard to pinpoint where the notion of the alternative ends and the mainstream begins, but the categorically uppercase OUTPOST gallery in Norwich is an interesting case study. Formed in 2004, catalysed by a symposium on artist-led spaces held the year before, during the Norwichbased East International biennial (an event that saw the crowd bemoan the lack of permanent arts spaces in the area), OUTPOST is nonprofit and volunteer-run, with a rollingcommittee administration model based on Glasgow's veteran Transmission Gallery. So far. so 'alternative': but it also received £117,000 in project funding from Arts Council England last year, and has installed strict programming and brand-design structures that, despite the changing personnel, have been adhered to since its inception. There are always 11 exhibitions a year, for example, opening on the first day of the month and closing on the 21st. These are primarily solo endeavours (bar one annual group show of work made by artists signed up to the gallery's members programme), Each exhibition invitation is issued in a different font (displaying a consistency in inconsistency), and all images on the website are monochrome on a vellow background.

More important, however, is the role the gallery plays in the local arts ecosystem. In that, bar a couple of other, later, more modest artist-led initiatives, such as the Promontories screening programme and Stew Gallery, it practically is the local ecosystem. There is little alternative, or 'nonalternative', to OUTPOST. The Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts at the University of East Anglia, in the same city, only stages a couple of shows a year, so if any of the many artists turned out by the 1,800student University College of the Arts (whose numbers are prolific enough to fill three studio complexes in the city, one of which is run by OUTPOST itself), or other interested members of the public, want to see a show, or just generally congregate more often, then it's OUTPOST they must visit. Otherwise they face a lengthy train or car journey to Wysing Arts Centre (with whom OUTPOST has a close relationship) or the new Firstsite space in Colchester.

The rolling committee helps the organisation maintain a sense of democratic diversity within its relative monopoly, however, with each member, all of whom live locally, serving for 12 months, during which



OUTPOST is plugged in through its extended network of committee members and former members: it frequently identifies younger artists, picked from far and wide, just before they become (usually deservedly) voguish. It is this quivering on the edge of the mainstream and the underground that sets the institution apart from both other artist-run spaces and their publicly funded and commercial brethren. It is able to maintain a foot in both camps precisely because, due to its location, it is not defined by the force of other local institutions.



Two weeks after Hurricane Sandy – the largest tropical depression ever recorded in the Atlantic Basin – devastated coastal communities around New York, senior citizens in highrises along the ocean in Queens still lacked water to flush their toilets. Meanwhile, across the river, in Manhattan, collectors and dealers dropped \$1,061,763,700 at the major autumn contemporary art auctions. That's roughly what Obama and Romney each spent on the run for the presidency.

Perhaps this buying reflects a flight to higher ground in uncertain times – in many cases the bidding proceeded with the dull relentlessness

with which the water washed ashore – but the connection between the two events is neither ironic nor allegorical. Such lavish spending is both symptom and cause of the social entropy that magnifies the effects of disasters like Sandy.

On the night of the storm, in Chelsea, where I live, water flowed up the streets and into the gallery district. On 24th Street, for example, a Mini Cooper parked near Gagosian Gallery floated onto the sidewalk. Up the block, next to Marianne Boesky, construction barriers anchored by beams larger than railroad sleepers tipped and bobbed in small, wind-driven waves. They began to founder



just as the local electric company shut off power in a deliberate blackout intended to preserve the underground relays that send electricity to the lower part of the island.

In the residential district just east of the galleries, water began rising through cellar floors and sewer lines. At home, I watched with a torch as it shot through cracks in the basement walls, carrying dead roaches and globs of dust and grit. So began four days without electricity and ten without heat – try finding a plumber and replacement parts for a boiler rotted out by saltwater in a flooded city.

By morning, a tinny stench tinged with the bite of sodden cardboard rose through the house. But the damage remained confined to the basement, which resembled a muddy swimming pool studded with unknown detritus. In the galleries nearby, however, silty, muddy tide lines a metre, sometimes a metre and a half above the floor - the ground floor marked the high-water level. Dealers hauled wet wrapping and sodden furniture from dark interiors to the sidewalks. A young woman with a below-ground space on 22nd Street sobbed into her cellphone. Gas-run pumps belched water into the gutters.

The tally of losses is sickening. It is borne, mostly, on rumours and off-the-record conversations. One hears, among other stories, that several art warehouses in Brooklyn and Queens were hit. That Printed Matter, the nonprofit vendor of artist and small-press publications, lost its archive and much of its inventory. That Ralph Lemon, the choreographer and dancer, lost 15 years' worth of drawings in an inundated storage facility in the East Village. That Trisha Donnelly was flooded in Red Hook, and Josiah McElheny in Gowanus. That some galleries will never know what went with the piles of pulpy watercolours and drawings tossed into dumpsters; they also lost their files and their computers.

Who is going to pay for all this and how is it possible for artists to make up the time and commitment spent creating works that have been destroyed? According to *The New York Times*, a single insurance company, AXA, has received \$40 million in claims from Chelsea dealers. But relying on insurance, for those galleries lucky enough to be covered, might prove useless: two



gallery directors have told me that their providers have already begun to baulk. A conservator who spent several days after the storm in a gallery on 24th Street wonders what will happen to works whose value doesn't warrant repair. What happens to the art handlers and installers who lose work as normal business yields to cleanup? Who is going to purchase restored inventory in an art market that focuses ever more relentlessly on the top tier and the easily resalable?

In one of the many and almost immediate efforts to help, the Art Dealers Association of America set up a fund to aid spaces that had sustained 'catastrophic damage that prohibits gallery business, drastically impaired cash flow, and demonstrated risk of a business's permanent closure'. That is bad. David Zwirner and Mitchell-Innes & Nash each donated \$50,000; Derek Eller, Wallspace, Printed Matter and Bortolami received the first emergency grants. Klaus Biesenbach, the director of MoMA PS1, organised relief missions to the Rockaways, the heavily hit area on the ocean in Queens, where he has a house, A report in the Style section of The New York Times described his going doorto-door with Madonna distributing spray cleaner and diapers.

Such generosity is exemplary, and such gestures have become a pattern in the US. Disaster hits and contributions to relief organisations like the Red Cross spike; volunteers arrive from out of state. But what does it say about the art environment, and about American society more broadly, when galleries with fresh programmes but modest commercial traction have

to rely on the kindness of those who dominate the ecology?

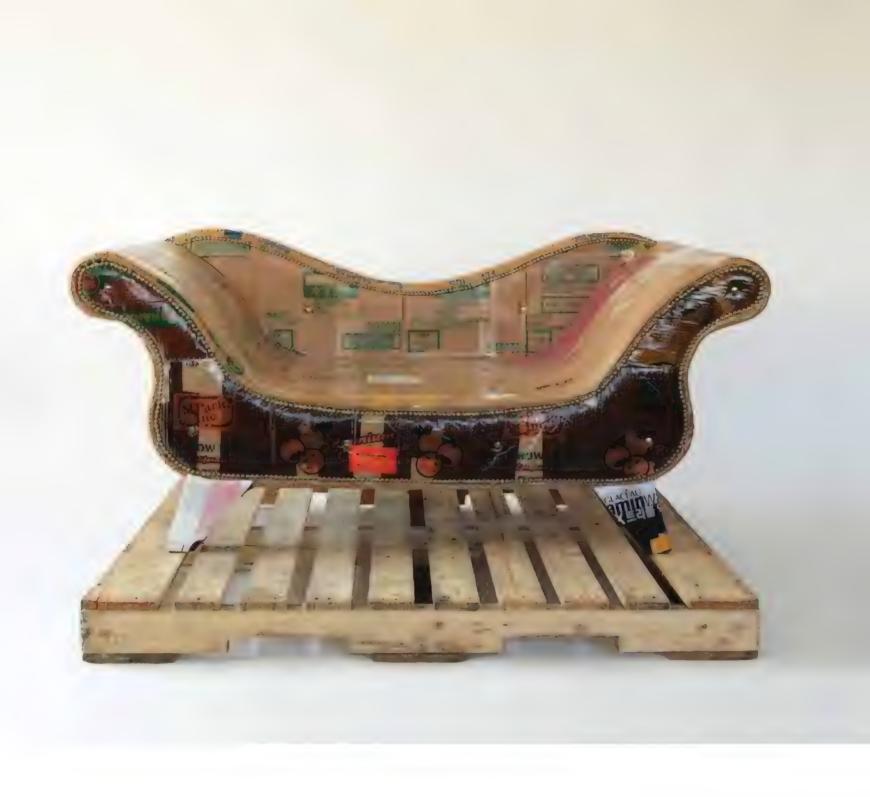
A few days after the storm, a letter appeared in the Times. It began, 'I write this letter in part because we have no electricity, and the house is dark and getting colder.' The writer attributes his situation not only to flooding but also to 'the collapsing infrastructure of the United States'. He means the electricity grid that has gone underfunded, alongside so many other necessities, in a political climate that demonises taxes and considers government an adversary, not an extension, of the people. The author of that letter is a high school student in Staten Island. You wonder how his parents feel, unable to keep their child warm.

Americans reelected Obama but live in the country that made Mitt Romney rich and callously clueless. We always think of the stuff, the aggregate billions of losses that measure the impact of a disaster. But in talking to gallery owners and employees who were, weeks after the hurricane, still sorting through damaged works and negotiating with insurance companies, I sensed that what they've lost beyond damaged art is a sense that their work has value. Such doubt, combined with the frustratingly slow, demoralising tasks of recording and repairing, compound an isolation like the kid from Staten Island feels. I can tell you that after ten days without heat you don't just feel cold. You feel a bit like the dead roach floating in the basement. It must be worse for people in the beach communities and in Red Hook. I still have a home.

Such feelings demarcate those who have been affected and those

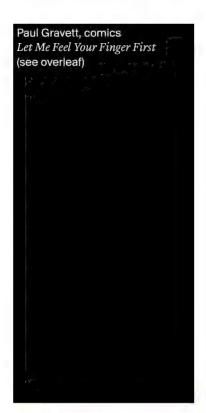
who just look on. It also runs through our society between those of us lucky enough to have and those who simply do not. The night the World Trade Center fell, my friend Ron and I, dazed and hoping for routine, listed some things for sale on eBay. In the field reserved for the items' location I wanted to put 'New York, the Proud', not just New York, but the Proud. Someone attacks your city, your country, your home, and you feel bereft, but proud. You fight for your family, and until we fucked it up and the president told us to go shopping and we went to war in Iraq, America felt like my family.

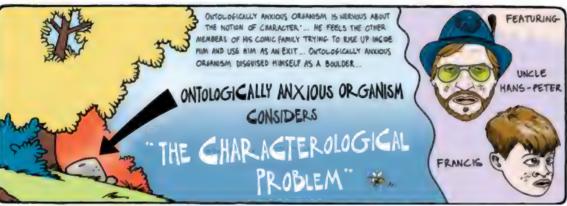
Before my heat was restored, a friend who had gone to East Hampton after a few nights without electricity told me to put on another sweater. I was already wearing a down parka and a hat. That kind of thinking has become reflexive in the US. Empathy sometimes seems as tenuous, and as hard to find, as heat after a flood.



KIM HYUNJUN / KIM YOUNGHUN / HAN JISOC

7 FEBRUARY - 3 MARCH 2013





Each bemused visitor entering the gallery foyer at London's Institute of Contemporary Arts was asked to put on a plastic mask featuring the face of a bespectacled, bearded, pockmarked man before joining a throng of identically transformed people inside the exhibition space. Losing their visibility and individuality, subsumed into an anonymous hivemind, all of them were soon following absurd instructions from an animated version of that same unsettling face - a floating head projected onto a screen. Spoken in German, subtitled in English, these commands included, 'Fall on the floor and play dead', 'How far will you go to obey?' 'Will you rebel?' The queasy atmosphere of this communal programming was compounded by interruptions from a comic strip, unseen but narrated panel-by-panel in a mock-academic Germanic accent, which listed the peccadilloes of our Big Brother-style master. We gradually learned that he likes nothing better on a hot summer

afternoon than tying up his twin nephews, Cute Punk and the lanky acidhead Clem.

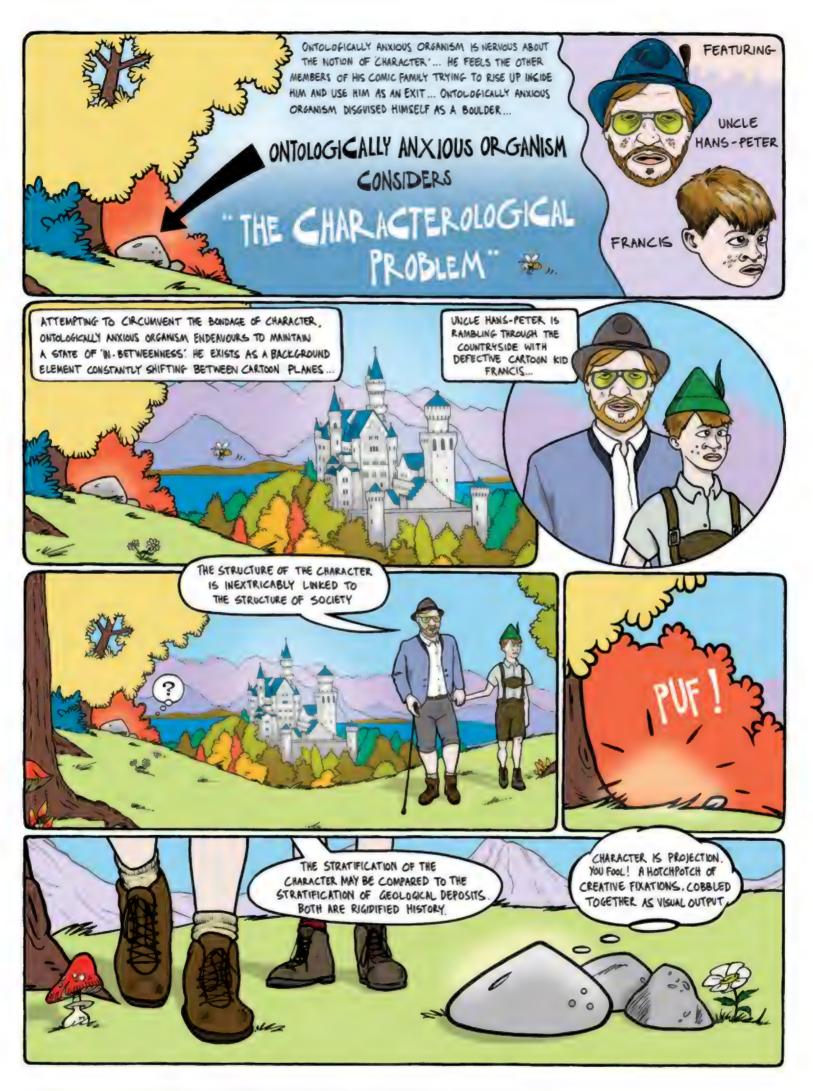
Welcome to The Uncle Hans-Peter Party, which debuted at the Comica Festival in 2009 and forms part of an ongoing, multifaceted comic art project by Let Me Feel Your Finger First (LMFYFF). Initiated in 1998 by London-based visual artist Richard Squires and straddling live events, print, animation, gallery and online exhibits, LMFYFF has been adopted by Squires as 'a pseudonym, a sham production company and as some ambiguous comic identity'. With an ever-expanding, interrelated cast, a part of some twisted but unified universe, fresh members of LMFYFF's dysfunctional, discomforting familienalbum have arrived with each new project. Uncle Hans-Peter remains its patriarch throughout, 'all bristles and pre-shave lotion'.

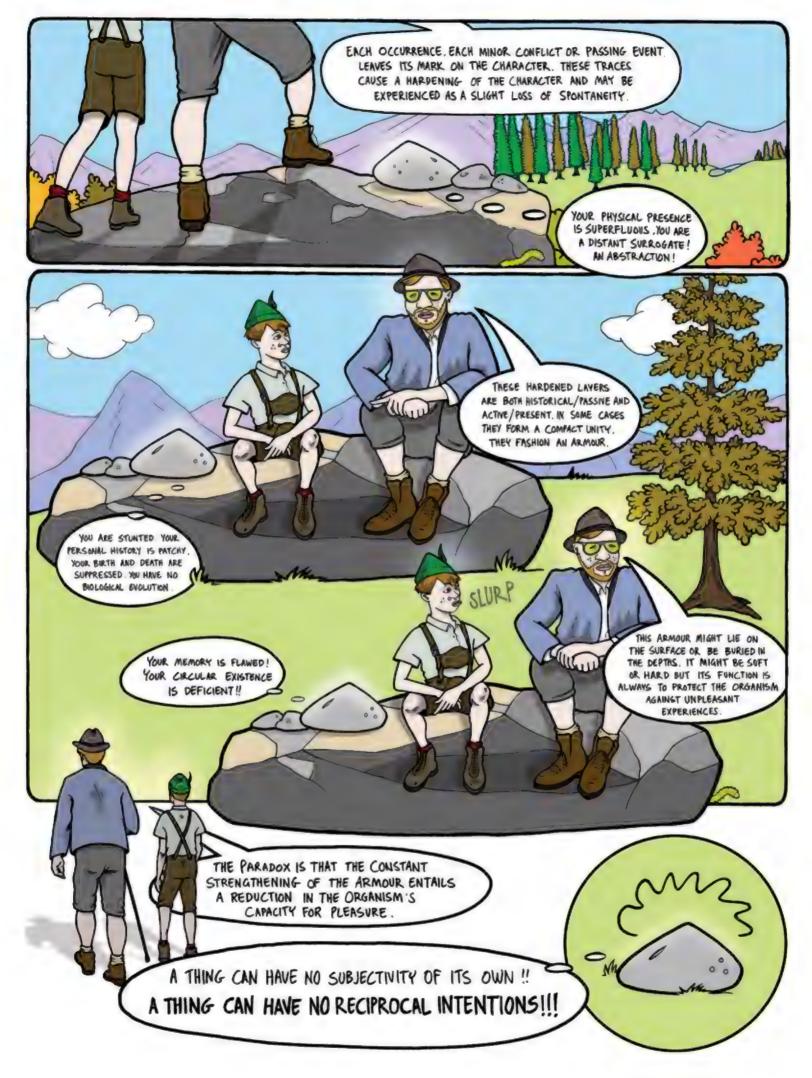
Early comics introduced Cute Punk in *Yep! Yep! Yep!* (1999) and Homo Zombies in Greenhorn (2000), the pair fatally crossing paths in the splattery animation *Homo Zombies* (2000). In 2007, nine-year-old Francis came to life in another a film for Britain's Channel 4 as a 'defective' character – cross-eyed and awkward – whose clapping, squeals, slurping, Woody Woodpecker laughter, lengthening Pinocchio nose and other outbursts are clinically critiqued by a child psychologist. Mischievous Francis finally refuses to be contained and spins out of control and out of the frame.

Tensions between submission and rebellion seethe throughout LMFYFF's storyworlds, most recently in Post-Colonial Cannibal (2011), a cooking pot that spawns problematic black natives drawn from early American animation's racist imagery, and in the artworld manoeuvrers Kunst the giraffe and Snide the ostrich. According to Squires, 'all these characters frequently appear to be active or passive, hunters or quarry. They are manipulative and

manipulated, prey to overwhelming appetites, compulsions or drives in narratives where control is often the underlying agenda.'

Uncle Hans-Peter and Francis reappear in a new strip overleaf, strolling in lederhosen through the sunny quasi-Bayarian foothills. As Hans-Peter lectures Francis on the nature of character and its relationship to environment, both are oblivious to the interior anguish of Ontologically Anxious Organism, a small boulder that, with a puf!, can shift location unnoticed to keep up with the onesided discussion. Squires was inspired to develop this oddball creation 'partly because of seeing these beautifully drawn comic rocks in European graphic novels like The Smurfs and [The Adventures of] Asterix.' Another source was R.D. Laing's writings on 'ontological insecurity' in The Divided Self (1960), which propose 'the possibility of turning, or being turned, from a live person into a dead thing, into a stone, into a robot, an automaton, without personal autonomy of action, an it without subjectivity'. In the case of Ontologically Anxious Organism, he is so anxious about the notion of 'character' that he has camouflaged himself as a background element of the comic strip. Nevertheless, LMFYFF's existentially challenged rock has somehow also starred in three short films (Ontologically Anxious Organism: Episode 1, 2 and 3, 2012), released on the Filmarmalade DVD label.





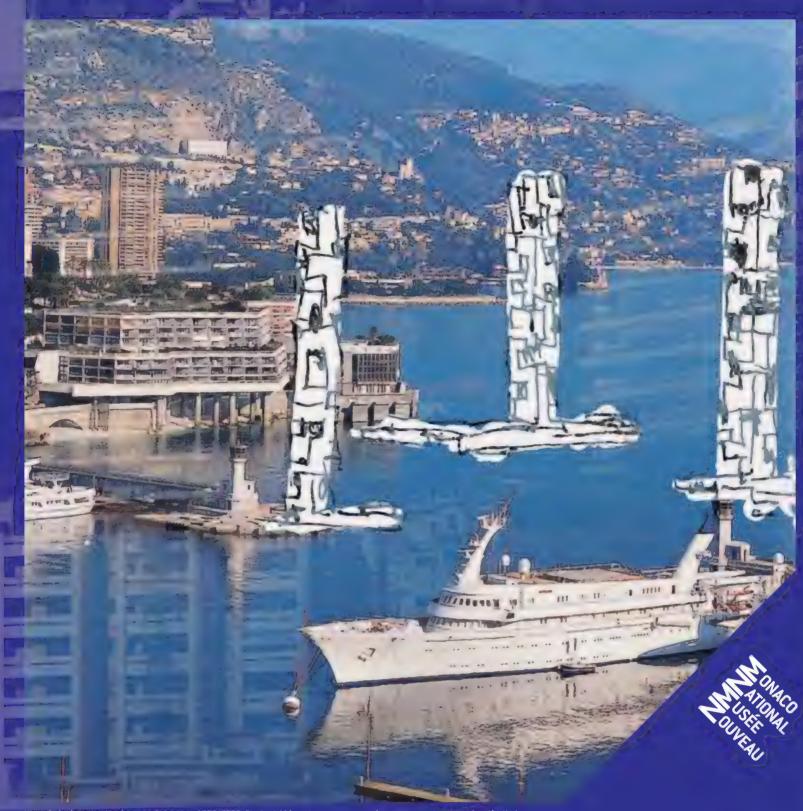


THE DOUBLE DREAM OF SPRING **GÜNTHER FÖRG**

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Yong Friedman <u>La Venise monegasque</u>, 1960/2006 Stylo bille et correcteur planc sur carte postale d'edition Collection NMNM © ADAGP, Paris, 2012 Photo: NMNM/D. Mille

Monacopolis

ARCHITECTURE, URBANISM AND URBANISATION IN MONACO, REALISATIONS AND PROJECTS 1858-2012

PRINCIPAUTÉ MONAGO

VILLA PALOMA 56 bd. du Jardin Exotique 19 January 2013 -12 May 2013 VILLA SAUBER 17 av. Princesse Grace 19 January 2013 -30 December 2013 MONTE-CARLO TRAIN STATION From 19 January 2013

Édouard Manet, Émile Zola, 1868. Musée d'Orsay. © 2012 Scala, Florence

Great Minds



Great Critics and Their Ideas
Interview by Matthew Collings

No 19: Zola on Realism

Émile Zola (born in Paris in 1840, died 1902) is known for his public defence of the works of Manet when this artist was the subject of ridicule, for his campaign of liberalism during the Dreyfus scandal (when a Jewish artillery officer in the French army was wrongly imprisoned for spying) and for his series of novels describing the history of a family under the Second Empire. One of these is a thinly disguised portrait of Zola's childhood friend, the painter Paul Cézanne.



ÉMILE ZOLA

In Courbet's paintings of the mid-1850s you find down-to-earth scenes. At the time they were interpreted as socialist, communist, bohemian and avant-garde, but also 'realist', all relatively new terms. Previously, from Brueghel onwards, scenes of peasants returning from work or entertaining themselves at the end of the day with music were small and patronising. Now the downtrodden had a place in visual art that was epic and challenging. Thirty years later my books were thought of as the literary equivalent. The term I invented for them, as a logical extension of realism, was 'naturalism'. I meant something particular by it: character and personality are shaped by history, and there are no individual heroes who transcend history.

Is realism always right?

EZ In the twentieth century realism lost its clarity as a buzzword. In the 1910s something in literature could be 'real' because it was experimental, like the way thoughts really flow, or reality is really perceived, but at the same time it might be unlike what most people really wanted to read. Art insisted on stripping away artifice. But the representation of reality requires certain pillars of artifice, it turned out: a narrative, a coherent voice and a graspable theme, plus pleasure rather than pain. By the

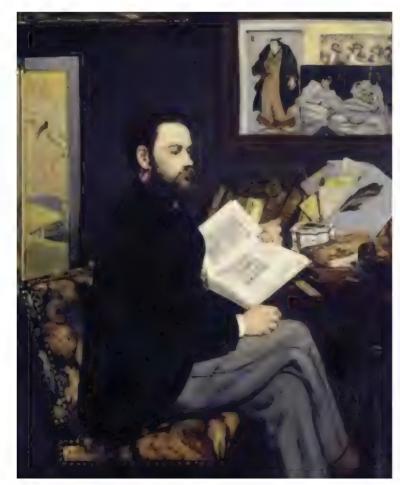
1930s the term had virtually become a way of saying: 'lacks sophistication'. In totalitarian societies the authorities violently demanded that it should. Elsewhere lack of sophistication was achieved naturally and accompanied by a combination of guilt and triumph. Today art has a hunger for reality, but the 'real' might be a penetration of the veil of illusion that consumerism generates or, alternatively, any one of a vast range of sinister sub-illusions issuing from the same source.

You wrote a book featuring a character called Claude Lantier, who is supposed to be Cézanne: is it a true picture of his biography? And are his brushstrokes realistic?

EZ You have to remember that Cézanne, like Julius Caesar, has no biography apart from textual reconstructions. And the book you refer to, *L'Oeuvre*, whose English translation is called *The Masterpiece*, is a key source in any biographer's conception of the life of Cézanne. They look for proof to validate ideas about his personality that they initially acquired from my novel, whose central protagonist is an artist bent on self-destruction.

I'm not sure that answers the question.

EZ Well, another thing to bear in mind is that novelists are seldom much good at getting the tone of art. You only have to think of the unhelpful sentimentalism that Colm Tóibín, Siri Hustvedt and John Updike advocate



as art commentary, which is swallowed by a middle class audience grateful for relief from the boredom of the serious. Those writers treat art as a holiday from their real work. However, the world of art has a logical place in my work. The Masterpiece is part of a novel sequence, consisting of 20 volumes, in which I look at the influences of inherited traits and environment on a single family over several decades, culminating in the period of the Second Empire. For the purpose of the work as a whole - the driving concept of all the books - I needed my central character in The Masterpiece to be an emotional wreck, and his paintings, which ought to celebrate life, to be dismally incoherent. He is the child of alcoholics. Alcohol's influence is a deadly theme throughout these novels. It's to do with bad blood. But it leads to all sorts of scenarios, some curiously ambivalent. In L'Assommoir, for example, a wedding party of drunken working people, including Claude Lantier's mother at a young age, goes round the Louvre. They're seeing the paintings for the first time. As the reader you see them too through their eyes. It's like a mad pantomime. You're shocked by the change from one world to another. and somehow originality itself becomes highlighted. Anyway, this is one group of workers. In Germinal I follow the lives of another: coal miners. And in The Masterpiece it's artists. Not just Cézanne, but also Manet and Monet, as well as lesser figures. These literary representations of different sectors of society are constructed from fragments of experience and research. No character from real life features in an untransformed way. Lantier's first painting in The Masterpiece, for example, is not based on anything by Cézanne but on Manet's Le Déjeuner sur l'Herbe. So, as for truth, there is no answer. After all, who are you, Matthew? Who made you up?

Oh yeah, I see what you mean. Gosh, that is a thought! Well, in relation to realism, what is the point of the myth of Cézanne as a 'primitive'?

EZ As you say, it's a myth. Cézanne's pose of hopeless country bluntness when he had to negotiate art circles in Paris, where you get these tales of him refusing to shake hands with Manet - on the grounds that 'I haven't washed for a week!' was based on social unease caused by neurosis, not simplicity. He was the most educated major painter of his time. He haunted the Louvre. What he does with painting, with his juddering contours, discontinuous surfaces, rhythmic structures, complex balance of contrasting and harmonious colours, as well as his repetitive broken mark, which you referred to earlier, is a kind of art that not only looks for its bearings in 'art' but also constitutes a profound philosophical comment on it, in that it says that art is fundamentally about

But everyone knows who he is, surely?

ΕZ The art audience today is entertained by picture books showing colour photos of his sites, with his paintings alongside. They say, 'Ah, he really gets the colours of the area around Aix-en-Provence!' But they see this kind of thing as compensation for a lack of clarity. They move on to paintings by artists they like that actually look like photos. They feel nothing but relief when someone in the papers who's been given the joke title 'art critic' announces that Cézanne suffered from failing

white ones. What do you think are the subtle ones?

YOU MUST ACCEPT THAT NO ONE OWNS THE TRUTH. RATHER, WE SPECULATE, AND WE CONSTANTLY CREATE

seeing, about perception. His brushstroke diminishes everything else, it diminishes 'the world' as authority and emphasises instead apprehending the world. Apprehension itself, this mental abstraction, is made into a concrete thing, concrete matter: Cézanne's surfaces that tell you about sensations, fragmentary glimpses, but little else.

Wow, that's lyrical! You can see why people love him!

I don't think they do any more. I used to say he was sincere but misguided. However, a consensus builds, and it is impossible merely to express an opinion about Cézanne today: I like him; I don't like him. This would just be ignorance. It's confusing because the fact is that the consensus has all but evaporated. People today, and this certainly doesn't exclude art people, do tend to see him as the Moses of a baffling Modernism. Ignorance does indeed reign. He is avoided because he is considered cold, intellectual and intangible. But when he first began to be regarded as more than an obscure provincial, which was the 1890s, he was celebrated as passionate, sensual and rooted in the earth.

eyesight, that he was too arrogant to get new glasses, he really couldn't do verticals because he was half blind, he always did them 'on the tilt' and so on. While pretending to deplore reactionary views, the audience secretly believes in the truth of what it says in the London Evening Standard. You'd think this was the old aunties and the mums and dads: the straights. But I'm always amazed at how artists believe it too - quite famous ones. They don't question it, because it's a matter they rarely think about anyway. It's great social material, actually. If I were still alive I'd put it into a novel.

You mentioned politics, how does that work with Cézanne?

EZAgain, it's not straightforward. He was an anti-Drevfusard. He didn't shout about it and make pronouncements, as Degas and Renoir did, his fellow anti-Semites. But he was a political reactionary for sure. As the author of J'accuse!, my exposé of hypocrisy, I'm on the other side of the political fence to him. But artistically he is far from conservative. His paintings of a natural order, which appear to be making themselves anew every time you look, are a profound allegory in visual form for a political attitude. You are forced to put reality together for yourself in a fresh way, as he has put it together for himself. You must accept that no one owns the truth. Rather, we speculate, and we constantly create.

It's only right to object to them being too high. Politics is always about ideals whose purpose is to change reality. So all students should have a political consciousness. They should be aware of the issues and they should join in the demonstrations. The other subtler issues have to come after the more obvious black and

What about politics and art nowadays?

How about student fees in the UK?

Well, art schools have become

questionable institutions. You imbibe platitudes that come from a bottomless well of diluted maxims originating in deconstruction. Over the years deconstruction has ossified into a creed, and its ethos, which used to be always to search for more in any situation than many people believe is really there, has reversed. Now it is about always settling for less. Seeing art history as mere ideology is only one example. Cézanne wasn't childish, but this is exactly the degenerated mental state that present-day art culture, as it is passed on at the education level, demands. Needy posturing. Childish emoting. Art critics on The Guardian, or authorities on culture programmes on TV and the radio, are all too willing to ratify your bullshit and be childish themselves. I think it is a political matter to reform art schools, just as it is political to fight for free entry to them.

> Next month: Wittgenstein considers Grayson Perry

ArtReview 57



Milenko Prvacki

Milenko Prvacki (b. 1951) was awarded Cultural Medailion of 2012 by the National Arts Council for his contributions in enriching Singapore's visual arts scene.



Milenko Prvacki - Covered Up. 173 x 200 cm, Acrylic on Linen, 2012

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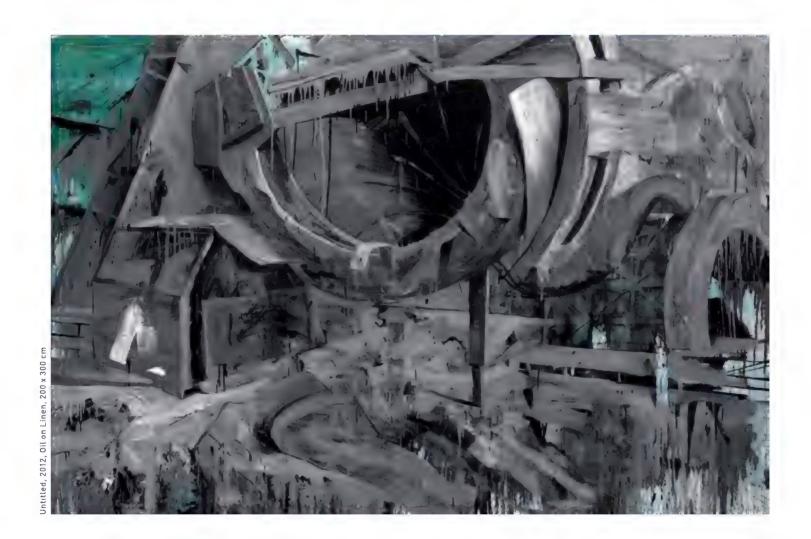
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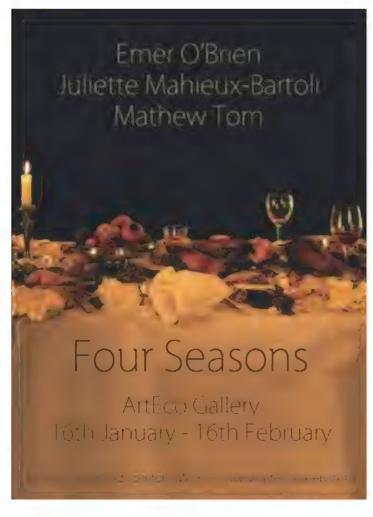
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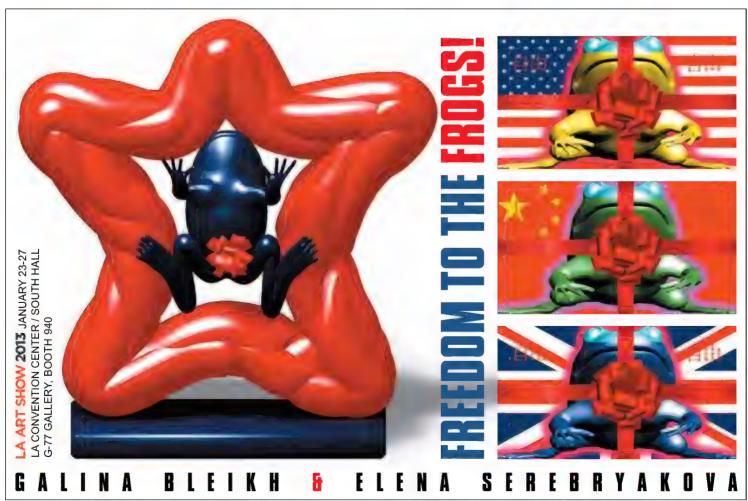
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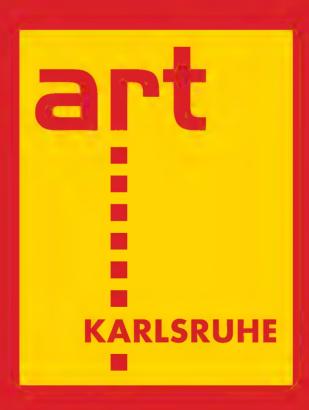
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ArtReview 67

Last year Sarah Lucas turned fifty. And this year marks what you might call the 25th anniversary of the beginning of Lucas's career as an artist – it was back in 1988 that she, and a group of other young artists just out of Goldsmiths College,

Sarah Lucas

participated in an ambitious DIY exhibition called *Freeze*, hustled together by classmate Damien Hirst. And although nothing at that point was certain, and a few years of doubt and hiatus had to click through those artists' lives, it is still astonishing how quickly the Young British Artists blazed into view and

made their mark – raucous, down-to-earth, affecting a punk, cheerful cynicism, which came to define British art in the latter half of the 1990s. The rest, as they always say, is history.

But becoming art history comes with its own troubles. How to have a history without becoming historical? How to stop being a Young British Artist in order to carry on being, well, just an artist – maybe a good one, and one who means to

From YBA to classic pervery – making the ordinary extraordinary

By J.J. Charlesworth
Portraits by Juergen Teller

stick around? These questions hover at the back of my mind as I stand in the audience that has turned up to listen to Lucas talk, at the launch of Sarah Lucas – After 2005, Before 2012, a new catalogue of her work since 2005, in an improvised gallery space upstairs from Lucas's London gallery, Sadie Coles, which has played host to a series of shows by Lucas for the

last 12 months, all but one under the headline title *Situation* (which is also the name of the space).

That title might hint at the process of taking stock as an artist, as each instalment remixed and recombined new and recent works with works from the distant past. What might Lucas's situation be today? It's an important moment: Ordinary Things, on show at the Henry Moore Institute in Leeds last summer, was the first big retrospective for the artist in the UK, trailing Damien Hirst's panned Tate Modern summer blowout and Tracey Emin's 2011 retrospective at the Hayward Gallery. This year, the artist has her first big solo show in a London public gallery, at the Whitechapel Gallery in October. With Ordinary Things, Lucas's own act of retrospection was both more modest and more complicated than those of her contemporaries. In fact, Ordinary Things wasn't quite a 'retrospective' in the normal sense of the word. Highly edited, it concentrated exclusively on Lucas's

sculpture, and admitted only three works from the 1990s, including the iconic Au Naturel (1994; the slumped mattress that harbours a cucumberand-melons scenario of sexual hilarity) but not the work that remains emblematic of the artist's YBA heyday – Two Fried Eggs and a Kebab (1992), the table adorned with foodstuffs that stand in for breasts and genitals. And if Ordinary Things emphasised the idea of Lucas's work as sculpture, it's interesting to note that what this excluded was what Two Fried Eggs includes – the use of the photographic image.

Materiality and its image are tense partners in Lucas's work. In the cluttered space of the current Situation - this one titled with typical Lucas-ey humour Situation Classic Pervery - that tension is almost ecstatically played out: while the show comprises objects, they're bracketed by one wall of billboard-size photographs of older works - a reproduction of an ancient Lucas photocollage, Soup (1989), in which the tips of penises, peeping from their foreskins, are superimposed like weird monochromatic meatballs in a lurid field of what looks like tinned vegetable soup; and a blowup of one of Lucas's 1990s Self-Portraits, the one of her reclining, the image taken from behind and above her, turning her upside down, while cigarette smoke drifts upwards from her mouth.

It strikes me that this rift is important in the evolution of Lucas's work, which, in the iconography of the YBAs, stood out for the uncompromising simplicity and clarity of its use of imagery, and its distilled, purified grasp of visual contradiction. Sex and death might have been the common thread of so much YBA art, but it was Lucas who managed to make it both personal and universal, by homing in on a demotic, commonly understood culture – that of gender trouble and sexual conflict. And it was, in those early works, through objects containing



this page, clockwise from right: Two Fried Eggs and a Kebab, 1992, table, fried eggs, kebab, 1992, table, fried eggs, kebab, photograph, 151 x 90 x 102 cm; Soup, 2012, digitally printed wallpaper, dimensions variable; Ordinary Things (installation view, Henry Moore Institute, Leeds, 2012); Hysterical Attack (Mouths), 1999, papier māché, chair, 75 x 82 x 78 cm; Situation Classic Pervery (installation view, Situation, London, 2012)









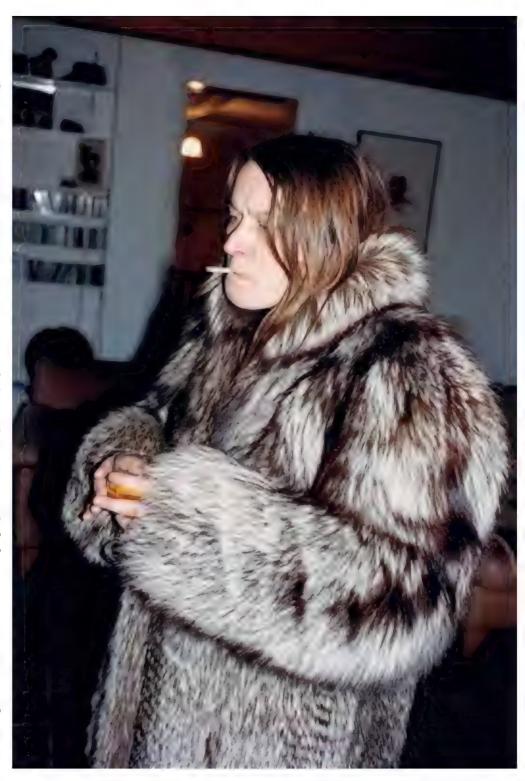


images and images containing objects, that Lucas's work played among the ruined, everyday language of street and tabloid newspaper, the joking double entendres of cheap porn and fast food: Lucas, looking warily to camera, chomping on a big banana in her self-portrait Eating a Banana (1990); or the stunned, punning visual tautology of Two Fried Eggs and a Kebab; or a naked man holding an exploding beer can in front of his own crotch in Got a Salmon On (Prawn) (1994). Lucas's imagery and objects of the 1990s didn't go in for subtlety or artful complexity, yet their apparent vulgarity was their sophistication, smuggling what appeared to be the artlessness of ordinary life into the white cube of the gallery while presenting a wider public with the enigma of art that turned the ordinary into something complicated, uneasy and enigmatic.

Image and materiality might sound like a dry, analytical binary, well suited to talk of sculpture. But image is never neutral when it comes to images of selves, or of self-image, something that continues to preoccupy Lucas. Chatting with the artist for a moment in the crowd, after the formal conversation, I'm surprised at what you might call her lack of image: shorter than one might guess from pictures, with an inquisitive, sideways-slanting gaze and a broad grin harbouring more teeth than seems necessary, Lucas somehow dodges the usual conventions of appearance, style, mannerism, gender. It makes her opaque, inscrutable in a sense. Though having said that, perhaps it's an effect enhanced by the gigantic silver-fox fur coat she's wearing. Or which seems to be wearing her.

A few days later, I'm turning over a line from After 2005..., where, replying to a question from model Lily Cole about the 'commodification of women', Lucas remarks, 'I look around and see women all trying to look like the same stupid doll.' I email Lucas some questions - she's back in the depths of Suffolk, well away from London - and ask her about the references she often makes in interviews to her early reading of feminist theory, particularly the writing of Andrea Dworkin, and how it might have framed her sense of male and female, of personal and social relationships. I've never quite bought the idea that her work was some kind of outright feminist critique. "We're all thrown in somewhere," she replies. "In other words, born. Can't really blame anyone for that. I was very close to my dad as a child and I'm still fond of blokeyness. I didn't dwell much then on being a woman myself. Later, when I had that kind of a look around, through Dworkin's eyes, I was a bit shocked."

I explain that I've always found that her work might in some way be about reconciling with men – about how absurd they are, or what their predicament is, and that there's a kind of tragicomedy in sexual difference. I wonder if it's 'forgiving', in a way. "I think we should realise



that we play a significant part in constructing our own reality," she writes. "Have a think about what we do to ourselves. Also what we think we're saying. I think 'with' my appearance—most of us do, and even if we don't, we're still saying something. The early self-portraits were about that—having a look at myself. Subjectively I had some idea what I didn't want to be saying. Having a look was sitting on the fence a bit. Not having to reason out or entirely justify. More of a 'what about this?'"

That question mark above the nature of appearance might lead one back, in stages, to the big shift in Lucas's work over the last decade: the steady disappearance of Lucas-as-image, and the growing assertion of a more overtly sculptural approach. It was never

that clear that Lucas's earlier work presented the aggressive, in-your-face posturing as a straightforward rebuff to sexist stereotypes or misogynist culture - though in the media-hyped atmosphere that came to surround the YBAs, and with the influence of gender theory in art-critical debates, it was easier to see it that way. Rather, Lucas's work seemed to present a kind of absurd 'what if': a 'what if' the image of woman could fail completely to support any of the usual signs that stand in for women, by throwing matter and metaphor into a kind of self-destructive blender - breasts-as-fried-eggs-as-breasts? And not just women, men too. A penis-becomes-acucumber-becomes-a-penis. A comedy of broken stereotypes, objects as bathetic stand-ins for realities they nevertheless fail to represent.

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this and facing pages, clockwise from lower right: *Dayo*, 2008, plaster, steel wire, wood, 42 x 20 x 20 cm; *Nud* 27, 2012, tights, kapok, wire, linen string, 35 x 31 x 29 cm; *Swan*, 2008, plaster, steel wire, wood, 38 x 40 x 10 cm; *Miss Jumbo Savaloy* (installation view, Situation, London, 2012); *Dr. Ati*, 2012 (installation view, Museo Diego Rivera-Anahuacalli, Mexico City), tights, fluff, wire, adobe bricks, 83 x 46 x 44 cm

All images: © the artist, courtesy Sadie Coles HQ, London











THE HUMAN BODY
BECOMES A KIND OF RAW
MATERIAL, ABSTRACTED
AND GENDERLESS, WITH
LOOPS OF LIMBS TURNING
INTESTINAL - TWISTING,
CARESSING AND
ENFOLDING THEMSELVES



But recently, it's as if Lucas's sculptures have shed this surface of malfunctioning images, which reaches a sort of literal crisis in 1999's Hysterical Attack (Mouths), two slumped legs morphing from the backrest of a chair, the legs covered in a collage of magazine images of women's mouths, a smiling set of teeth in place of genitals. So in the ongoing Nuds series, the fashioning of fleshy bodylike members that Lucas first essayed with her Bunny figures (1997-) made from women's tights stuffed with wire and fluff, the human body becomes a kind of raw material, abstracted and genderless, with loops of limbs turning intestinal, twisting, caressing and enfolding themselves. They're more human for being inhuman, their slow contortions invoking a sense of human gestures with uncanny echoes of classical statuary - but they remain resolutely quiet, focused inwards, as if turning their backs to the onlooker.

This isn't to say that Lucas's work has forsaken the power of the image, only that it's as if she's now searching for authenticity, rather than inauthenticity, in the appearance of things. After all, it's not as if there aren't lots of tits and massive cocks in her recent work too. But the tone has changed. Rather than just pairs of breasts, there are now exuberant, excessive masses of tits, as in *Nice Tits* (2011). In Lucas's 2008 *Penetralia* sculptures, direct casts of penises fuse with the rough texture of wood and bone, suggesting magical artefacts or archaeological remnants.

There's a pagan, vitalist energy in these and in the Nuds, as if Lucas was looking for a counterpoint to the image-loaded world of contemporary culture, and calling up the echo of the primitive and ancient to do so. Maybe it's what prompted her to exhibit work in the Aztec-inspired architecture of the Museo Diego Rivera-Anahuacalli in Mexico City in 2012. And maybe it has just as much to do with Lucas having moved her residence away from London, setting up permanently with her partner in a place (formerly home to the composer Benjamin Britten) in a secluded corner of Suffolk. "I just think there's too much short-termism about, disposable stuff," Lucas writes about these atavistic forms. "I wanted to take a longer view. It seems to me that a lot of ancient and tribal art still exerts a lot of power. And that it does in spite of us not understanding what it's really about. Why is that? A tree exerts that power. The wind... I want to respond intuitively to things. To feel something. We all do it, but we hardly know we do it."

To say that Lucas's works work more as sculpture than ever before is to invoke an idea of sculptural value that opposes itself to the unreliable and deceptive world of images. Unlike her friend Franz West, the artist who did most to knock down highmindedness and good taste in sculpture in favour of the absurd and the abject (and to whom Lucas dedicated one of the *Situation* shows following his death), Lucas appears to be searching for the moment

when dumb, everyday stuff is redeemed by its ability to provoke unlooked-for fusions of representation and metaphor. For Lucas, this turn to how matter and materials might connect to a truer sense of bodies and of being sidestepping cliché and refusing the accessible language of stereotype that only conceals what it pretends to communicate - comes back to an austere commitment to the simplicity of materials and unembellished form: things that refuse to be other than they are, and in which the artistic intervention is what transforms them into something more than mundane, the 'magic' that Lucas often refers to, where a thing and its image provoke something more than the already known, or the already misunderstood. "It's a matter of good quality," writes Lucas finally. "Of fine feeling. Of delivering what's been promised, delivering more than that even. The thing being greater than the sum of its parts. The reality of charisma - transcendence. The power of an image. Otherwise it's just tacky. Same as all the other cheap bullshit that's produced."

Art should be "fine", she continues. "That doesn't mean it should be wrought in gold filigree. A glance at a high street jeweller should dispel that myth. Perhaps it's the thought that should be fine. And clear like the truth. A lot of manufactured objects alert my lewd detector. Like makeup on a pretty face.":

Sarah Lucas's Situation series continues at Sadie Coles, London, until February

Helen Sear lure

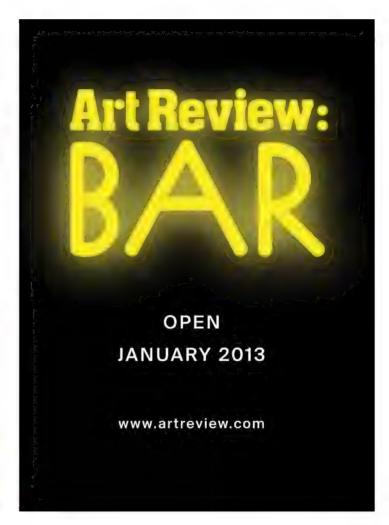
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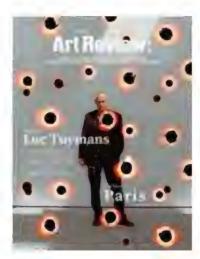
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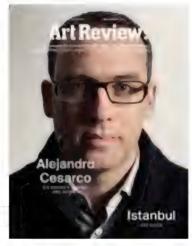
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YOSHITOMO NARA
The Puff Marshies Mini
2006
Urethane paint on fiberglass reinforced plastic
71 x 157 x 157 cm x 5 pieces
1 set consisting of 5 different colours



Meriç Algün Ringborg

What's harder to get into the EU – a Turkish national, or a thousand cigarettes, a typewriter and a shotgun?

Interview by Jacob Fabricius



JACOB FABRICIUS

You were born and raised in Turkey. For the last five years you have tried to become European – or should I say become legally accepted as an EU citizen? That process and your battle with the authorities have also been the subject of artworks. What has that process been like?

MERIC ALGÜN RINGBORG

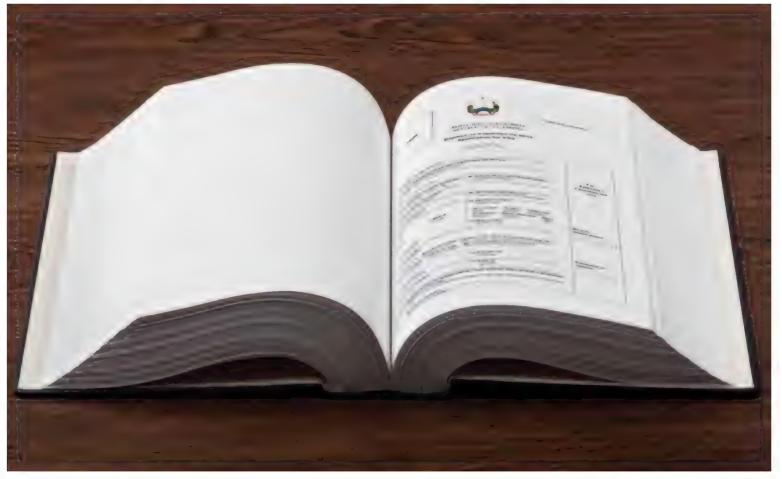
I come from Istanbul – a quite particular place to grow up in. Its position, being divided by the Bosporus, having land both in Europe and Asia, makes the Istanbul people almost schizophrenic in a way. When you cross the bridge to go to work, it says 'Welcome to Europe', and then you go back home again: 'Welcome to Asia'. You can never make up your mind as to where you belong; you end up always being in an in-between state. This relationship has become even more complex for me over the past five years with me moving to Sweden, which sometimes feels like the antipode of where I come from. The different sociopolitical structures and cultural differences became more visible and I became more 'in-between' than ever. Using the battle with the authorities in my work became a way of exemplifying this complex relationship. For instance, my latest work, Becoming European (2012), shows the ways and days I have resided within the EU over the past five years. I exist when I am in its territories, and when I am outside of its borders, I disappear. And this work stopped when I became an EU citizen.

In Becoming European you stamped your European travel dates, your European history, on white paper. The dates are stamped in blue if you entered Europe as a tourist, in red if as temporary resident, purple as pending residency, black as permanent resident and finally green as pending citizenship. The work ended when you became a European citizen – a date you haven't stamped...

MAR: When I first decided to move to Sweden, I came here with a tourist visa. My partner and I were so excited to live together that when we found out that we needed to wait up to six months to get a residency permit, we thought we should just start with the immediate tourist visa. So as a tourist, I was allowed to stay in Sweden 90 days, then I had to go back to my 'country of origin' and wait for this permit to be authorised. I know it takes even longer in other countries, but still, this was a very difficult situation for us. After five months I got this temporary permit and it allowed me to be in the EU for two years. After I used up this time, I was supposed to be eligible to apply for the permanent permit. What we didn't know was every time I visited Istanbul, which I do quite regularly, these dates were subtracted from my total time. So after these two years ended, I had to literally stay put in Sweden two to three months longer to get this 'permanent' residency, otherwise I would have to have been a temporary resident a year longer.

this page, both images:
Becoming European (detail),
2012, stamp on drawing paper,
3 sheets, 59 x 42 cm each.
Photo: Jean-Baptiste Béranger

facing page: The Concise Book of Visa Application Forms, 2009, hardbound book, inkjet print, 560 pages, 33 x 24 x 9 cm. Photo: Jean-Baptiste Béranger



This kind of bureaucratic parody doesn't reflect how real life works, and this was the most frustrating part of this experience. Formally this manifested itself in the authorities stamping my passport every time we travelled to Istanbul. I'd get a date stamp but my partner didn't, so I decided to use that model to create this fictional document in an attempt to translate this bizarre experience.

You leave the spots blank, when you are away from Europe – almost as if you don't exist, or do not exist within the European system at least. In your book Location: Date: Time: (2012) you look at topics like disappearance and issues of locating ourselves or someone else. On one hand, the book is factual, semiscientific, but on the other hand it is also fake, a mashup of your words mixed with different voices and sources. How did the book come about? What is it about disappearance and location that fascinates (or scares) you?

MAR: I am not scared of disappearing, at least not that I know of, but I am definitely interested in what comes out of a shifting of presence or time and when things fall into the cracks of history, bureaucracy or even everyday life. What would happen if the Bosporus disappeared, as Orhan Pamuk describes in his *The Black Book* (1990)? What would we find in that state of existence? What happens when the Swedish Tax Agency cannot register your name properly because it contains a diacritic letter and suddenly your name has changed? What happens when one is erased from a photograph? What happens when

the date line is modified according to [the island of] Kiribati's location? I don't know really, it's hard to say, but I thought if I made this book with all those things that I don't understand, I might come closer to understanding them.

So you created this little ecosystem of a book – did you feel that your questions were answered or did more questions pop up?

MAR: I guess more questions popped up, but it is good to ask these questions even though you know there might not be clear answers. In a way, I could delve into these ideas from different angles or points of view and weave these fragments, histories or narratives together by publishing them in the same book without indicating where they come from exactly. That being said, the book is in two parts, and there is also a prologue in which I try to examine the tools or the systems of recording and being recorded, and the vulnerable relationship entailed by interacting with these systems.

The rules, regulations and absurdities that authorities can project on citizens or visitors are often quite present in your works. It may seem obvious, but could you try and describe how this is reflected in works such as The Concise Book of Visa Application Forms (2009) and Destination: Mali/Peru/Kiribati (2009)?

MAR: The absurdities that come out of these regulated situations are present in many of my works but perhaps mostly in the two that you

mention. The Concise Book of Visa Application Forms is a very quiet piece underlining a very powerful structure that is only visible to those who are deemed to cross paths with it. Seeing those forms together in a closed structure like a book has a certain effect. It corners you. I find a lot of people laugh when they first see this book, but then they get really serious once they start reading the questions, because the piece suddenly acquires a voice, and not a pleasant one. The forms can ask you something like 'Have you engaged in any other activities that might indicate that you may not be considered a person of good character?' or 'Are you and your partner living in a genuine and stable relationship?' How do you answer that?

'Are you and your partner living in a genuine and stable relationship?' is a very intimate question. Relationships can of course be defined in many different ways, so can 'genuine' and 'stable'. I am wondering if they expect everybody to be married to a heterosexual partner and have two kids. Is that the idea of genuine and stable, I wonder?

MAR: That's exactly the nature of these questions. They want you to be 'normal' like everyone else, and if you are not, you don't necessarily fit. It's like the social networking websites – they also want you to define your relationship: are you interested in men or women? Are you married? Do you have a partner? What is the status of your relationship? And there you can select 'it's complicated' but perhaps you have to be much more clear on a visa application form.

I don't use Facebook, but I really like 'it's complicated'! Everybody should be at all times able to reply to anything: 'It's complicated.'

MAR: On the other hand, with *Destination...* I was really interested in how this subject matter could be further manifested via everyday objects, to underline that clash between the private and the public. When I was searching for the application forms, I found these customs regulation lists, and I started collecting the objects listed. It is of course again a parody, but it also takes its point from the reality of rules and regulations. Furthermore, it has potential in terms of creating different narratives – like, you can bring up to a thousand cigarettes along with a typewriter and a shotgun. It implies certain personal characteristics and enters the private in a very sneaky way.

What these lists or questions asked in these forms also serve as crucial evidence of the different levels of power of different countries. For instance, with *Destination*... I would have liked to also select a 'bigger' country and collect the regulated items on their lists, but they are too elaborate and I literally couldn't afford that.

Could you share one of the 'bigger' country's lists here?

MAR: They are usually very long, with a lot of specifications, but I found this sentence on an Australian Customs's restricted-and-prohibited-items rules, which I thought was quite curious: 'Imports not allowed under any circumstances: Devices designed or customized to be used by a person to commit suicide, or to be used by a person to assist another person to commit suicide.'

Basically you cannot bring a belt?

MAR: ...no Kool-Aid either.

Do you ever feel watched or followed? If so, how and when?

MAR: I know that no one is watching me as such, but I certainly got that feeling as a result of that 'complicated' relationship with the









this page, clockwise from top: Ö (The Mutual Letter), 2011 (installation view, Untitled (12th Istanbul Biennial), 2011), sound installation, c. 2hr loop, offset print on blue paper, bound in booklets, each booklet 11 x 15 cm, 42 pages, photo: Nathalie Barki; The Risk of Being in Public, 2011, slide projection, 136 slides; Destination: Mali, 2009, found objects, dimensions variable; Untitled (Tree Top Project), 2009-, Polaroid photograph

immigration office. What disturbs me is the act of being registered or recorded, which is certainly connected to being watched. This is something that happens to everyone and not only through governmental agencies but also through society; we record and register each other all the time. That is why I started this experiment with writing down every time I thought I might have appeared in someone else's photograph in a public place. I have done this for a year and I think I appeared in 136 photos, and of course these are only the ones I noticed. Many people have asked me why I didn't ask for the photos, but I was more interested in transforming these moments into text in an attempt to explore the relationship between fact and evidence. I don't know if this makes sense, but I really think it wouldn't be the same thing if I had the photos themselves. It becomes more invasive that way, and I didn't want to do that. I stopped the project because it became unpleasant and too repetitive after a while, and I just wanted to break free from this obsessive behaviour of watching and registering people taking photos. I then found a website that offers a software to remove tourists from the backgrounds of photographs, called Tourist Remover.

You are talking about The Risk of Being in Public (2011). Have you tried Tourist Remover?

MAR: No, I haven't dared to use it, but I don't think it would be so different to manipulating an image in Photoshop, although this software recommends taking four more images of the same scene, so you can manipulate the image more easily, which means four times as many meaningless snapshots. However, for me the name was more important than the process. In a website forum, I read someone asking: 'Where do all the tourists go?' Good question, where are all these erased tourists?

Do you ever watch or follow people?

MAR: Yes, I've obviously watched people, especially in connection with *The Risk of Being in Public*, but never followed someone; at least not in the traditional sense.

The flaws, traps and difficulties that we sometimes experience with language (as Turkish and Danish, we are both nonnative English speakers) and the possible mistakes that this may involve often creates charming linguistic nuances. Could you describe the work Ö (The Mutual Letter) (2011)?

MAR: The language that dominated my life after I moved to Sweden was English. In the beginning, I was very enthusiastic about learning the Swedish language and adapting to life here, but after a while not learning the language almost became like a resistance and a way of maintaining that in-between position. However, Swedish isn't foreign to me; I understand many

things even though I can't really speak it, and after a while I could hear that there were a lot of words that were the same in Swedish and Turkish. So I did some very primitive research - I went through the entire Swedish dictionary while cross-checking it with the Turkish dictionary, to find the words the two languages had in common. It took four months of daily labour, and I found 1,270 words in total. Not really useful words, mostly terms adapted from French or English, but the striking thing was that they not only meant the same thing but were also spelled the same. Many people think that I've found some computer program to do this, but really I haven't. So I had all this material when Adriano Pedrosa came to visit me in Stockholm in the summer of 2011. He thought it would be great to have this work in the Istanbul Biennial. I knew that I wanted to make a soundpiece, where my partner and I would read one word after another, so you could hear the nuances in pronunciation. And Adriano suggested including it also as a printed dictionary. Since the point of departure of the biennial was Felix Gonzalez-Torres, we thought it would be fantastic to make these dictionaries like his passports (Untitled (Passport #II), 1993), something that the visitors could pick up and bring home. So in one room, there was a stack of these dictionaries, in another there was the sound of us reading it.

Recently you worked with the opposite, the less-desired books - why were you interested in 'unborrowed books'?

MAR: With The Library of Unborrowed Books (2012) I have tried to look more closely at the bureaucratic cataloguing of the world from another perspective than the governmental documents I have been so occupied with. The piece, quite simply, is all the books from a selected library that have never been borrowed, which, when collected and put on display as a library of their own, come to connote the ambivalent relationship between absence, presence and knowledge, which echoes and persists, or not. It is a certain take on the gaps and cracks of knowledge and history. I made the first section of this project in collaboration with the Stockholm Public Library and now we are doing a new collaboration with a library in New York, and it will be on display in Art in General from January to March.

You have tried to measure and calculate the world in a number of very different ways. In Our Home Weighs 1.223.990 grams (2009–10) you weighed the contents of your one-room flat, and in the ongoing Untitled (Tree Top Project) (2009–) you take Polaroid photographs of the treetops you can touch and write down their GPS coordinates. The amount of milk in the fridge keeps changing, butter comes and goes, and trees grow all the time – in some sense both are impossible or endless projects. What made you begin on these projects, and how do

they relate to the other more political or fictional projects?

MAR: These works almost confirm the impossibility of measuring the world, because everything is constantly changing, and that is probably the beauty of life for as long as you can handle it. To be honest, I couldn't handle it for those first two years of moving to Sweden. Then finally I got fed up with the situation and began working on these projects to take control of my position in my new life. I love quoting Umberto Eco in relation to this. In an interview in Der Spiegel he says, 'We like lists because we don't want to die.' By using the method of listmaking, I could get some sort of control over life by creating a constant, almost like freezing time. I think the more political projects relate in that they are coming from the same situation and period, but look at the other side of this spectrum. I am not sure how the fictional works relate exactly, because I am still in that chapter now and it is hard to get a perspective when one is in the middle of something.

Could you describe the view from the Bosporus?

MAR: I don't think I can, but I am flattered you ask. I have smuggled water from the Bosporus every time I have visited Istanbul over the years, and I now have a few litres in my studio. My initial idea was to see what the process would be if I tried to bring a large amount of water from the Bosporus. Basically to find out what the rules and regulations would be on something like seawater, a seemingly unreasonable thing to transport. Then I saw this Mandla Reuter piece Fountain (2010), in which he took 5,000 litres of water from the Fontana di Trevi in Rome. It was visually stunning to see that amount of water in an exhibition space. But I think with my piece what interests me more is the paperwork, the administration of this. I can't just decide 'now I will bring 5,000 litres of water from the Bosporus'. I need to get permissions.

Kirsten Pieroth also had a really hard time smuggling water from the Red, the White, the Black and the Yellow Sea in 2002. I wanted to end the interview where we started, at the bridge of the Bosporus. I never saw the signs, but I think the 'Welcome to Europe' and 'Welcome to Asia' signs that you described are somehow quite poetic and also central in the whole debate about Turkey being part of the EU. You should smuggle those signs out of the country! But I guess that's complicated!

Meriç Algün Ringborg: The Library of Unborrowed Books is on view at Art in General, New York, from 26 January through 30 March

There is a fine line between what Abraham Cruzvillegas calls autoconstrucción and autodestrucción. Somewhat grammatically awkward, the former proposition (which might seem like, but isn't, a synonym for DIY) is the umbrella term under which the Mexico-born, Mexico City-based artist has been presenting and developing his rich and

Abraham Cruzvillegas

varied production since 2007 (he has been working as an artist since the 1990s). Seemingly a bit more linguistically at ease with itself, the latter proposition introduces a new phase in the artist's practice, inaugurated with his December exhibition at Regen Projects in Los Angeles, titled *Autodestrucción 1*. However, whether the work created under the prefix *de* radically differs

from that created under the *con* remains to be seen. And that may be the point. Or one of the points. But before getting

stuck in the koanlike matter of that philosophical conundrum, perhaps it would be useful to clarify our terms and ask just what autoconstrucción is. And where it comes from.

Autoconstrucción, for Cruzvillegas, refers to his parents' home in Ajusco, a neighbourhood to the south of Mexico City, and

to the ad hoc method by which it was built. Constructed on notoriously inhospitable volcanic rock, Ajusco was originally settled by squatting families (Cruzvillegas's included) during the 1960s. These early settlers built their homes not all at once but in phases, adding parts and whole rooms when finances and material circumstances permitted, and with neighbours helping neighbours as needed. Such a progressive, collective and organic way of building ensured that the homes and neighbourhood in which they evolved were (and still are) 'definitively unfinished' – to use a favoured Duchampism of Cruzvillegas. Essentially unplanned, in a permanent state of flux, made with local and/or found materials and rooted in community, this style of architecture was the source of inspiration for Cruzvillegas's *autoconstrucción*.

If the political position behind autoconstrucción ever seems unclear, it is because the artist's dialectical attitude is fully present on every level of the work conceptually,

politically and materially. Where most privileged Westerners, who have been culturally trained to condemn poverty, might perceive such conditions as nothing more than an affliction to be endured by the poor, Cruzvillegas sees extraordinary ingenuity, methodology and community-building through building. This, however, does not imply an uncritical embrace of these conditions. Rather, he seeks organically to account for the complexity, ambiguity and potential contradiction contained in any sociopolitical problem. All of which is to say, akin to Ajusco, that the so-called definition and even meaning of *autoconstrucción*, as well as the kind of work generated under its aegis, is in a continual state of expansion.

This is precisely why and how, under Cruzvillegas's auspices, *autoconstrucción* has been able to manifest in so many guises, places and modes: from small autonomous sculptures to large sculptural-cum-architectural installations; from mobile musical collaborations to an hourlong film, even a

For the Mexican artist, the term 'autoconstrucción' has referred to a series of projects rooted in the ad hoc, selfbuilt homes of his native Ajusco. What does it mean, then, that he's referring to his latest work as 'autodestrucción'?

By Chris Sharp

Autodestrucción 1, 2012 (installation view). Photo: Brian Forrest. Courtesy Regen Projects, Los Angeles





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play. Autoconstrucción is multiplicity incarnate. Indeed, the term could be said to designate more of a spirit and an ethic than, say, a theory-driven aesthetic. And yet his works are often united by an identifiable formal sensibility, whose predominantly found-object or poor-material aesthetic influence is as indebted to Robert Rauschenberg, David Hammons and Jimmie Durham as it is to Gabriel Orozco. The difference between them and Cruzvillegas, however, is the highly personal, specific and inherently protean programme to which his cultural and material universe adheres. Thus does the freestanding sculpture Autoconstrucción: Departamento de Defensa (2007), which consists of a diminutive totem of wedges of wood stacked one on top of another, with a series of broken bottles glued to the summit, deploy such found aesthetics towards the end of representing homemade security devices as seen atop the outer walls

of economically challenged neighbourhoods. Neither a condemnation or affirmation of poverty, such a work celebrates the ingenuity people are liable to bring to such circumstances. The spirit of collaboration and hybridity that informs the artist's evolving method can be seen in his musical projects titled - any guesses? -Autoconstrucción, at the CCA in Glasgow in 2008, and later, at the end of his DAAD residency in Berlin, The Self Builder's Groove (2011). At the core of both projects were songs the artist had written primarily about Ajusco, produced, in the Berlin project (in collaboration with Gabriel Acevedo Velarde and Sebastian Gräfe), 'in the space', to quote Cruzvillegas from the attendant publication, 'between a punk three-chord strategy, sample dub tradition, rebajada's slow motion earsplitting, hip-hop appropriation and Tyrolese-Tibetan electro-digital tunes'. In the Glasgow version, a pedal-powered vehicle



(evolved from a bicycle) with speakers attached to it, made in collaboration with Glaswegian John O'Hara, roamed the city and broadcast the songs. In Berlin a band was formed by the artist, giving three concerts in different parts of the city (as is often the case with Cruzvillegas's projects, both incarnations were accompanied by publications, which are not so much catalogues as they are documents of the process, inspiration and community generated by and generative of each manifestation of *autoconstrucción*).







this page, from top:
Autoconstrucción, 2009, HD video, colour with sound, 1 hr 3 min; The Self Büilder's Groove, 2011, mobile soundsystem, 170 x 130 x 400 cm; Autoconstrucción, 2008, mixed media, dimensions variable.
Images: courtesy the artist and Kurimanzutto, Mexico City



this page, both images: Untitled, 2010, wood, beer caps, bulbs, roots, fabric, iron, dimensions variable. Photo: Florian Kleinefenn. Courtesy the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris



Cruzvillegas directly portrayed Ajusco in *Autoconstrucción* (2009). Inspired by a childhood memory of witnessing his parents having sex, the artist created a 62-minute pornographic portrait of his neighbourhood which features four heterosexual couples of varying ages engaged in explicit indoor and outdoor sex, intercut with pans and shots of the buildings, textures and colours that make up Ajusco. Little or nothing to do with a drive to shock, its desire to portray sex links up with the artist's holistic and inclusive attitude, which registers elsewhere in his irrepressible embrace of marginalised or dissident subcultures.

All but returning to the inspirational roots of *autoconstrucción*, the most spatially expansive embodiment of the ever-mutating term took place in 2010 at Galerie Chantal Crousel in Paris. Titled *La Petite Ceinture* (after the wall that formerly surrounded Paris and that geographically, economically and culturally delineated an inside and out), the plastic aspect of this exhibition comprised a large, architectural, circular structure that, made exclusively of found materials such as scraps of wood, was reminiscent of a skeletal favela and filled the entire main gallery space. This unruly object was complemented by a photocopied publication,

which featured interviews (conducted by Cruzvillegas) with knitters, community gardeners, slam poets and other figures who issued from a cultural space that was alien to clichés of Parisian identity.

Questions of identity, its relationship to sub- and counterculture, and how it is constructed, inherited and displayed through fashion and subculture have played an important role not only in autoconstrucción but also, it seems, in the dialectical shift to autodestrucción. The first manifestation of it, at Regen Projects at the end of 2012, consisted of a series of hanging and freestanding sculptures made of rebar, wire, feathers, jewellery chains, textiles and curing strips of beef, and was heavily informed by the artist's interest in zoot suiters (or Pachucos, as they are known in Mexico) and their Second World War French counterparts, Zazous – subcultural groups whose rebellious nonconformity was made to visibly register in sartorial excess. As is often the case with Cruzvillegas, the interest has autobiographical roots: his great uncle, who might have been a character in a Julio Cortázar story, was a zoot-suiter jazz musician who ended up in France during the war. For Cruzvillegas, the formation of identity is the product of a complex exchange

of paradoxical forces that bring into play both construction and destruction, separation and inclusion, a departure and ultimately a return, full of affirmation, negation and contradiction. This being the case, *autodestrucción* promises to be as much about creation as it is about destruction, and as such underlines the overall exemplary – to my mind – dialectical complexity of Cruzvillegas's practice.

While researching this article and reading through the abundance of material and artist writings, I was struck by the following handwritten quotation from Robert Smithson's Hotel Palenque (1969–72) in the Mexican artist's Documenta notebook (you may not have noticed him, but he was a 'participant', surreptitiously composing colour-coded, ad hoc sculptures every day from on-hand material on the streets of Kassel): 'Buildings being both ripped down and built up at the same time.' It seems like a note to self, a sage and compact reminder of the paradoxical nature not just of Cruzvillegas's work, but of the world in general.:

You have seen her before. Not like this – frozen in space and machine-carved from an ancient mammoth tusk purchased on the Internet – but identically posed; balanced gracefully on her right foot with her slender arms stretched out wide, as if holding an invisible skipping rope. Eyes squeezed shut, mouth wide open; whether screaming, laughing or singing, it is impossible to tell.

Then the pattern receptors kick in. The napalm girl. The Pulitzer Prize-winning icon of Vietnam War atrocity – one of photojournalism's

Adel Abdessemed

decisive moments, a snapped shot seen around the world – now an aesthetic object in prehistoric dentine.

It is an unusual operation. Not the brain's; it does this constantly, and effortlessly, the entire synaptic process taking less than a second. What the artist is processing, however – the conversion of a moment into a monument, in the anachronistic form of

figurative statuary, using an instantly recognisable detail of a preexisting photograph - is less common and more problematic.

There are plenty of three-dimensional appropriations of famous photographs in the public sphere, but most are heroic, flag-waving affairs – Iwo Jima, the firemen at Ground Zero, that sort of thing – not naked prepubescent girls.

In the institutional canon, the artwork most similar to Adel Abdessemed's *Cri* (2012), other than Andy Warhol's screenprints of a grieving First Lady, is Abdessemed's *Coup de Tête* (2011–12), a colossal

bronze erected last autumn in front of the Pompidou Centre in Paris, as part of a retrospective of the artist's work (Abdessemed is by far the youngest artist to be thus honoured). Recognition of the moment *Coup de Tête* monumentalises is even more instantaneous than with *Cri*: it is French footballer Zinédine Zidane's career-closing headbutt into the chest of the Italian defender Marco Materazzi in

What happens when an artist monumentalises moments in time – especially when they already exist as iconic images?

By Christopher Mooney

the 2006 World Cup final. After the collapse of the Twin Towers, this is probably one of the most mass-communicated images of the twenty-first century, simultaneously experienced by some three-quarters of a billion people. Which explains the crowds of people who have assembled around it on each day of the exhibition's run to have their pictures taken in its presence, and why, in Google metrics, it already has, in just a few months, a broad cultural notoriety few works of contemporary art ever achieve: more than a Jeff Koons puppy, right up there with a Damien Hirst shark. >



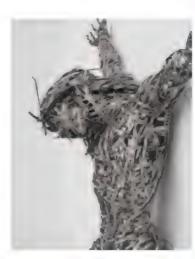




this page: Pressoir, Fais-Le, 2002, video, colour, 3 sec (loop)

facing page: Je Suis Innocent, 2012, digital c-print, 230 x 177 cm

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Coup de Tête: the title translates as 'headbutt' but also as 'on an impulse'. Materazzi says something nasty about Zidane's sister and calls him a terrorist, Zidane goes berserk and the world watches as his impulsive explosion of freedom becomes a tragic, inglorious fall from grace. Coup de Tête is replete with ambiguous significance. Counter-commemorating infamy or vengeance, honour or shame, madness or righteousness, in shadow-black bronze; it is easy to see and feel the attraction, not just for the crowds but for the artist. Infamous for his animal snuff films, women-suckled pigs, burnt-out cars, garbage-filled boatpeople boats, immolated self-portraits and razor-wire Christs, Abdessemed is that rarest and most mythic of artists: the engaged and enraged provocateur. Over the last dozen years a prolific outpouring of his drawings, videos, sculpture and photographs have borne unflinching and spectacular witness to things we would rather not see. Violence, oppression, cruelty and death: Abdessemed converts these into works - into 'acts' - and asks us to lock eyes with them, take responsibility for them, own them and buy them. The strategy has earned him a privileged position among the contemporary art world's edgiest enfants terribles, especially in his adopted country of France, where his Algerian origins, like those of Zidane, bring a number of hot-button issues to the fore.

Cri conjures its own complexes of collective recollection, but otherwise seems to operate in a different register. The use of mammoth tusk is arguably provocative, but



facing page, from left: Coup de Tête, 2011–12, bronze, 534 x 218 x 348 cm; Exit (detail), 2007, 11 yellow neon works, 24 x 35 cm each

all images: © the artist, ADAGP Paris 2012. Courtesy the artist and David Zwirner, New York & London

this page, clockwise from top: Décor, 2011–12, razor wire, collection François Pinault; Talle Mère Tel Fils, 2008, aeroplanes, felt, aluminium, metal, 2700 x 400 x 500 cm; Hope, 2011–12, refugee boat and resin, 206 x 244 x 579 cm





is the image? Unlike Coup de Tête, or the many antecedents – Picasso's response to the bombing of Guernica, Géricault's raft, Goya's commemorations of resistance to Napoleon, David's visit to Marat's bathroom and so on – its depicted moment is not contemporaneous with its creation. Forty years ago (the photograph was first published in 1972, a year after Abdessemed's birth), the image of a Vietnamese girl, running naked, badly burned, crystallised opposition to the war; since, it has served as metonymic signifier for the abomination and cruelty of all war. But, like this, isolated and ivoried, what does she mean? Is she a war memorial? An antiwar memorial?

Abdessemed has performed appropriations less overt than this with other works: the dimensions of his Helikoptère (I) (2007) drawing, for example - performed by the artist while dangling upside down from a rope attached to a hovering helicopter - correspond exactly to those of Géricault's Raft of the Medusa (1818-19). And the measurements of his large bas-relief of taxidermied animals, Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf (2011-12), match those of Picasso's Guernica (1937). These correspondences perform some form of mystical mimesis, stealing powers from the original works and indexing them in their elevated canonical register of iconic value. Does this work? Of course it does, once it is pointed out to you, but it feels a bit hollow: an inside joke, a gag.

Compared to these contrivances, however, Abdessemed's little girl provokes a veritable

firestorm of incendiary associations. Yet it is still difficult to see how, in her present form, she is in any way political; and there is nothing, beyond her decontextualised nakedness, that is particularly contentious about her. Surely there is something else at work. The title, borrowed from Munch's Scream and perhaps Ginsberg's Howl (from a David Zwirner press release: 'The title of the work, Cri (French for "scream"), is a direct reference to the poem by Allen Ginsberg (Howl, 1954-1955), which denounced the destructive forces of capitalism while also reflecting the author's anti-militaristic views') seems to suggest a broader existentialist meaning. But what, precisely? Anticapitalism? Antimilitarism? On 8 June 1972, Phan Thi Kim Phuc cried, 'Nóng quá, nóng quá' ('Too hot, too hot'). What does she cry now? And what does this cry decry? Anything? Nothing? Everything?

'Cry' is the word that Abdessemed uses most often in interviews and statements to describe his 'acts', be they cars or Christs: 'It is a cry'; and 'I am an artist of the cry'; and 'The only reality that matters is the cry'. His napalm girl, however, is at best an echo chamber, borrowed for her resonant capacities but otherwise empty, gutted of all performative meaning except, perhaps, an ability to convert provocation into commodity. Beyond that, she is inarticulate. Drowned out. Like so many signals bouncing around in the general hubbub of the everyday, the 'reality' of her cry – and his – are lost in the noise.:

Adel Abdessemed: Je Suis Innocent is at the Pompidou Centre, Paris, through 7 January; a solo exhibition of his work, Vase Abominable, is at David Zwirner, London, from 22 February through 30 March

Gentrify This

Stylener Stratch,
Services art exicentre,
Services for se staying
Appears to be staying
Appears to now-By Kimberly Bradley Photography by Andrea Stappert

Must art-driven gentrification always follow the same trajectory? The one in which artists colonise cheap spaces in an industrial area, gallerists follow, restaurants and bars arrive to keep everyone fed and happy, then people with more money 'discover' the place, chasing prices up and the artworld out - only to repeat the cycle elsewhere?

In unified Berlin, it has long seemed so. I arrived too late to experience the first post-Wall art hub on Auguststrasse, but watched gallery migration occur under bridges (Jannowitzbrücke), behind landmarks (Checkpoint Charlie), in an old department store (Lindenstrasse), on a grotty side street (Brunnenstrasse) and in industrial halls along smelly canals (Heidestrasse). For the past 20 years, gallery districts have cropped up and disappeared like fairy rings in the forest.

The most recent cluster, however, looks different - slower, more eclectic. Perhaps more sustainable. The migration first became visible in 2009, when several of Berlin's prominent galleries - like Isabella Bortolozzi and Klosterfelde - rather quietly moved not east, as had previously been the trend, but west, to a nondescript neighbourhood incorporating parts of the Tiergarten and Schöneberg districts, south of Mies van der Rohe's glass-box Neue Nationalgalerie and traversed by the broad Potsdamer Strasse. Interestingly, some were leaving white cubes for more residential spaces, most tucked into back courtyards or on upper floors, ie, nearly invisible from the street.

"We came here because it was completely different," says Martin Klosterfelde, whose gallery occupies a grand beletage apartment

at Potsdamer Strasse 93 with ornate wood mouldings and French doors - a dramatic departure from the white cubes he had on Zimmerstrasse. Matthias Arndt moved into a similar space across the street, upstairs from the Wintergarten theatre. Along the nearby Schöneberger Ufer canal, Bortolozzi began showing her edgy program (including artists like Danh Vo) in a noirish apartment lined with dark wood panelling.

It wasn't long before other galleries began settling into small storefront or courtyard spaces on the side streets of Kurfürstenstrasse and Pohlstrasse: newer dealers like Tanya Leighton, Sassa Trülzsch, editions and multiples specialist Helga Maria Klosterfelde and veteran Giti Nourbakhsch (who'd actually been the very first to arrive here, in 2006, but closed amid unclear



circumstances in early 2012). It was as if Berlin's go-go mid-2000s art scene had had the same reality check as the global financial markets, and gallerists were perhaps looking for more intimate spaces to downshift, to contemplate or, as Klosterfelde says, to "make the artists work with a different kind of space".

These days not all of the spaces are so intimate. In mid-2009, the Berlin daily newspaper *Der Tagesspiegel* moved out of its Potsdamer Strasse complex, including halls where the printing presses (ta-da! – instant industrial chic) ran. Juerg Judin, a Swiss gallerist who scouted the original Haunch of Venison space on Heidestrasse (which opened in 2007 and closed in 2010) and later launched Nolan Judin there in 2008, secured a long-term lease on the vast spaces with impossibly high ceilings.

"I came across these buildings long before they were for rent," says Judin, whose artist roster highlights lots of meticulously made two-dimensional work by artists such as Dexter Dalwood, Adrian Ghenie, Peter Saul and Danica Phelps (Judin lives nearby, in a revamped 1950s petrol station). "I couldn't resist the natural light and the proportions of the rooms. It's like a kunsthalle. Though Berlin is full of good spaces, to have such a central location on this scale was irresistible."

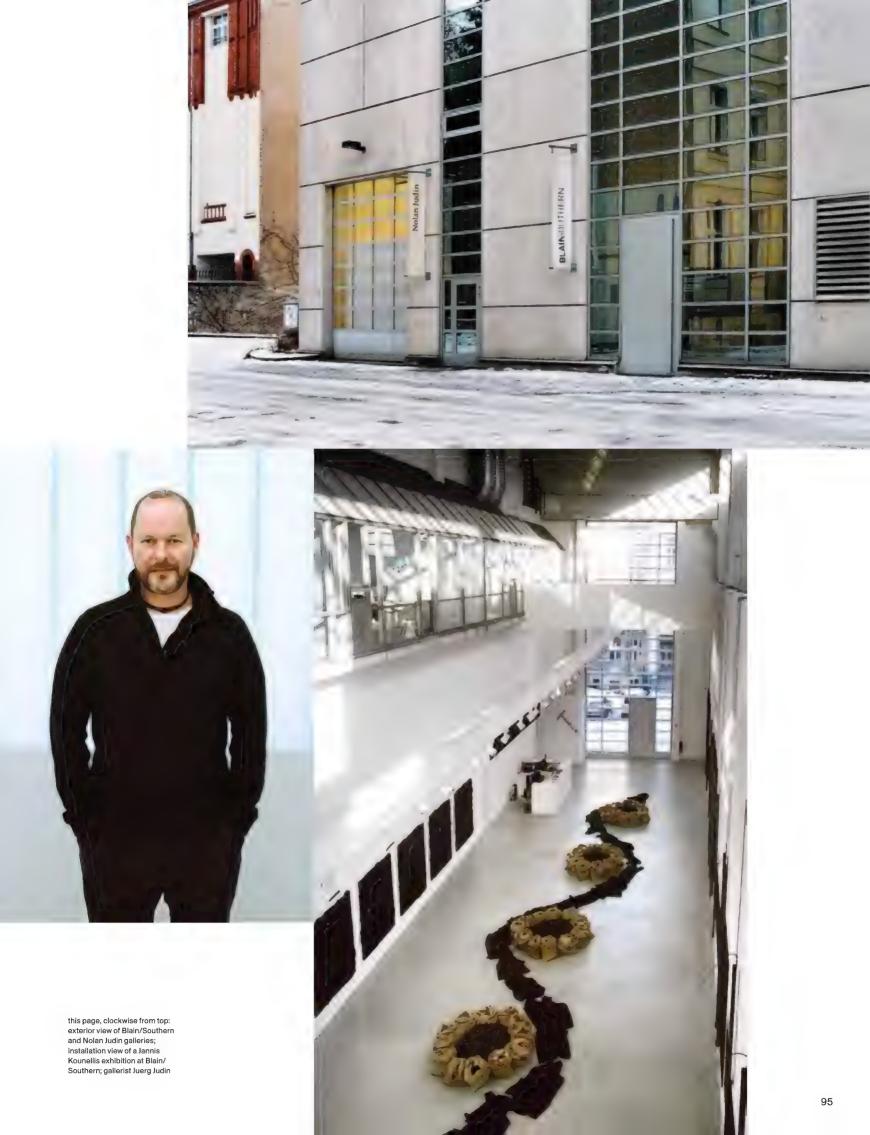
Blain/Southern, a familiar neighbour with a new venture, took the next-door space and christened it (in a still-rough state) with a Tim Noble and Sue Webster show in April 2011 (alongside a launch party for *Frieze d/e* in Judin's space). After an extended renovation, it reopened in April 2012 with a Jonas Burgert show, kicking off a series of blockbuster exhibitions like the museum-quality show featuring Arte Povera legend Jannis Kounellis in autumn 2012. The more traditional buildings in the courtyard are now, predictably, packed with smaller galleries as well, including Side by Side, 401 Contemporary and the art consultancy GoArt!, run by curator Miriam Bers and Stefano Gualdi.

The fashion world's arrival into artsy territory is usually the first sign of the latter's end. But the third space in the former printing press is avant-fashion purveyor Andreas Murkudis's 1,000m² store, which opened about the same time as Judin's gallery. It's a place where those who can't afford Lawrence Weiner can buy a Dries Van Noten jumper or Mykita sunglasses so as to at least look the part.

This district's transformation wasn't driven by artists settling into studios or project spaces, even if a few, like Albert Oehlen and critic/salonista Ingeborg Wiensowski, are longtime residents, and the roughshod Freies Museum(Free Museum) courtyard at Potsdamer Strasse 91 is a nonprofit art centre run by a group of lawyers. In fact, historically this area has been more a musician's lair. David Bowie and Iggy Pop lived nearby during their time in Berlin; Blixa >



this page, from top: legendary dive bar Kumpelnest 3000, on Lützowstrasse; fashion shop Andreas Murkudis, in the former *Der Tagesspiegel* printing press complex







Bargeld had his office in what is now Klosterfelde. British music critic Dave Rimmer still lives in a courtyard apartment just off the corner of Kurfürstenstrasse and Potsdamer.

The intersection remains a microcosm of what goes on here. On one corner is a 1970s building occupied by the sex shop LSD (Love Sex Dreams), which sits across from a bustling Woolworths; on the other side of the street is a Turkish vegetable market. The streets display a heady architectural, economic and racial mix. Most storefronts are utilitarian, downmarket or both (car-glass repair, anyone?), Gallery or the arts bookstore Do You Read

Downstairs, Bethan Huws (who got Mullican into the building) works in a studio literally lined with research notes and images; in the rear is a storage room filled with crated work. Huws moved from Paris to Berlin two years ago for the space and, she claims, the German openness to contemporary art. "I love this neighbourhood since it's not developed," she says. "You see real Berliners, and it's kind of grotty. The only thing that's not so good is the lack of food culture." (She's right: there's nary a restaurant, except for Joseph Roth Diele, a book-lined boîte serving German comfort food. Judin claims that two new restaurants are soon to move in.)

Willem de Rooij has had a large studio directly on Potsdamer Strasse for the past few years. More recently, Douglas Gordon purchased two buildings on Kurfüstenstrasse. He moved his studio into an L-shaped space in the courtyard building in late November 2012. His relationship to Berlin goes back to his DAAD (German academic exchange service) fellowship in 1998 (Mullican and Huws were also DAAD fellows). "I have to be fully committed to try to make something happen here," says Gordon. "Not only to have a great setup for myself and the people who work with me, but I also want to create something where I'm surrounded by people I love and admire. Like the galleries here. And other artists with space in this building."

Even if scaffolding still wraps the front building, he's already got a cosy enclave: downstairs are the galleries Supportico Lopez and Sommer + Kohl, both friends, and a showroom/storage space for Tanya Leighton (they're buddies from Glasgow). There's space for Gordon's archive and a screening room/ event area where brunches and concerts will take place. "Oh, and Kaspar König has his office on the ground floor," says Gordon, looking down. "He's an old friend." Gordon originally wanted all operations in the front building, but realised the advantages of having a courtyard corner studio. "From this vantage point I can see - everything," he says.

"I hope that too many people don't move away from here. It does feel kind of nice that there is a community thing here," he says, picking up a huge butcher knife from a table in the studio. The film he'll show at an exhibition at Blain/Southern (just metres away) in early February shows people in Tangier sharpening knives, without the knives. Their movements thus become a subtle dance, a display of muscle memory. Brandishing his knife, Gordon looks pleased as punch in his new HQ.

this page, from top: courtyard in front of artist Douglas Gordon's studio: a restful nook in Gordon's studio

facing page: Douglas Gordon in his studio





This isn't the area's first time as an arts hub. In the 1920s – before the Second World War ravaged Potsdamer Platz and long before the wall was erected nearby – this was home to more than 200 dealers of art, antiques and Asiatica. Legendary dealers included Karl Nierendorf and Alfred Flechtheim, Paul Cassirer and Justin K. Thannhauser. The notable galleries to have settled here in the interim were lone wolves: Galerie Raab in the 1980s, and Barbara Weiss, whose gallery was at Potsdamer Strasse 93 from 1992 to 2001.

Much has happened since then, but Potsdamer's evolution is far from over. There's no sign of the art crowd moving on. Upcoming developments, in fact, see more galleries arriving (Aurel Scheibler recently moved onto Schöneberger Ufer) and an intriguing building project involving a group of arts- and architecture-minded people who have collectively purchased a plot of land on Kurfürstenstrasse, where the hookers still are, a block from LSD. According to curator Carson Chan, one of the project's organisers, the group includes museum directors, architects, magazine editors and artists joining forces to construct a mixed-use residential-studio building designed by June 14 Meyer-Grohbrügge & Chermayeff (architects Sam Chermayeff and Johanna Meyer-Grohbrügge, both art-savvy SANAA alumni).

Such projects make it clear that artworlders here are, this time, making more meaningful, perhaps permanent investments. As the usual

gentrification cycle continues, it could very well be that the art won't be chased out at all, but rather integrated into the district's landscape, because many of those settling here have matured and become established galleries after several moves around the city. "This is a place where the art can stay somehow," says Judin. 'We used to rent cheaply and not do much to the space but hang art, and then move somewhere else. Now it's an investment – and a long-term one. It's a paradigm shift for Berlin.":





from top: installation view of Ian Hamilton Finlay's exhibition at Nolan Judin gallery; gallerist Juerg Judin in his home, a converted petrol station

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Quote of the month

"THERE'S ALWAYS BEEN A SEETHING UNDERCURRENT OF VIOLENCE IN CLUB CULTURE"

DJ and producer Andrew Weatherall, ICA Culture Now. 8 June 2012

Galleries USA

Andrew Kreps Gallery

Maria Loboda: *General Electric* 12 Jan – 16 Feb Open 10–6, Tue – Sat

525 West 22nd Street
New York, NY 10011
T+1212 741 8849
contact@andrewkreps.com
andrewkreps.com

Anton Kern

David Shrigley 10 Jan – 16 Feb Open 10–6, Tue – Sat

532 West 20th Street New York, NY 10011 T +1 212 505 5555 info@antonkerngallery.com antonkerngallery.com

Casey Kaplan

Giorgio Griffa: Fragments 1968–2012 10 Jan – 2 Mar Open 10–6, Tue – Sat

525 West 21st Street New York, NY 10011 T +1 212 645 7335 info@caseykaplangallery.com caseykaplangallery.com

Cheim & Read

McDermott & McGough: Suspicious of Rooms Without Music or Atmosphere Don Bachardy: Portraits from a Canyon: Los Angeles in the 60s and 70s: Selected by Jack Pierson 10 Jan – 2 Mar Open 10–6, Tue – Sat

547 West 25th Street New York, NY 10001 +1 212 242 7727 gallery@cheimread.com cheimread.com

The Drawing Center

Alexandre Singh: *The Pledge* Ignacio Uriarte: *Line of Work* Ishmael Randall Weeks: *Cuts, Burns, Punctures* 17 Jan – 13 Mar

Open 2–6, Wed – Sun; 12–8, Thu 35 Wooster Street New York, NY 10013 T +1 212-219-2166 info@drawingcenter.org drawingcenter.org

Gavin Brown's Enterprise

Christopher Knowles 12 Jan – 23 Feb Nick Relph 12 Jan – 23 Feb Open 10–6, Tue – Sat

620 Greenwich Street New York, NY 10014 T +1 212 414 4144 gallery@gavinbrown.biz gavinbrown.biz

Harris Lieberman

Liz Glynn, Jason Kraus, Dashiell Manley and Stephen Prina 17 Jan – 17 Feb Open 10–6, Mon – Fri

508 West 26th Street
New York, NY 10001
T +1 212 206 1290
gallery@harrislieberman.com
harrislieberman.com

Jack Shainman Gallery

Zwelethu Mthethwa 24 Jan – 23 Feb Open 10–6, Tue – Sat

513 West 20th Street New York, NY 10011 T +1 212 645 1701 info@jackshainman.com jackshainman.com

Margaret Thatcher Projects

William Betts, Gary Carsley, Cathy Choi, Jus Juchtmans, Tad Mike, Maria Park, Heidi Spector, William Steiger 17 Jan – 9 Feb Open 10–6, Tue – Sat

539 West 23rd Street New York, NY 10011 T +1 212 675 0222 info@thatcherprojects.com thatcherprojects.comom

Metro Pictures

Trevor Paglen 7 Feb – 9 Mar Open 10–6, Tue – Sat

519 West 24th Street New York, NY 10011 T +1 212 206 7100 gallery@metropictures.com metropicturesgallery.com

Regen Projects

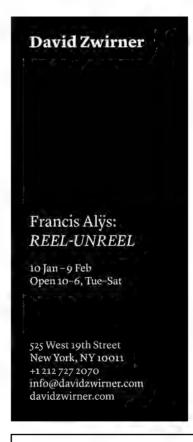
Jack Pierson 12 Jan – 16 Feb Open 10–6, Tue – Sat

6750 Santa Monica Blvd Los Angeles, CA 90038 T +1 310 276 5424 office@regenprojects.com regenprojects.com

Tanya Bonakdar Gallery

Sabine Hornig (Gallery 1) Dirk Stewen (Gallery 2) 10 Jan – 23 Feb Open 10–6, Tue – Sat

521 West 21st Street
New York, NY 10011
T +1 212 414 4144
mail@tanyabonakdargallery.com
tanyabonakdargallery.com



David Zwirner

Luc Tuymans: The Summer Is Over
10 Jan - 9 Feb
Open 10 - 6, Tue - Sat

519 West 19th Street, New York, NY 10011 +1 212 517 8677 info@davidzwirner.com davidzwirner.com

Galleries SPAIN

Helga de Alvear

Jorge Galindo & Santiago Sierra: Los Encargados 17 Jan – 2 Mar Open 11–2, 4.30–8.30, Tue – Sat

c/ Doctor Fourquet 12 28012 Madrid T+34 91 468 0506 galeria@helgadealvear.com helgadealvear.com

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Galleries UK

Aspex

Sarah Dobai, Andy Holden, Suzanne Moxhay: *Human Made Things* 15 Dec – 3 Mar Open 11–4, Mon – Sun

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Collective

Andy Holden Curated by Frances Stacey 12 Jan – 10 Feb Conor Kelly and Calvin Laing 23 Feb – 24 March Open 11–5, Tue – Sun

22–28 Cockburn Street Edinburgh EH11NY T+441312201260 mail@collectivegallery.net collectivegallery.net

Contemporary Art Society

Elizabeth Price 9 Jan – 8 Feb Open 11–5, Tue – Fri Artist talk, 17 Jan, 7

59 Central Street London EC1V 3AF T +44 20 7017 8400 info@contemporaryartsociety.org contemporaryartsociety.org

Limoncello

Cornelia Baltes 23 Jan – 9 Mar Open 11–6, Thu – Sat

340–344 Kingsland Road London E8 4DA T +44 20 7923 7033 limoncello@limoncellogallery.co. uk.org limoncellogallery.co.uk org

MOT International

Bank 10 Jan – 16 Feb Open 11–6, Thu – Sat

First Floor, 72 New Bond Street London W1S 1RRT T +44 20 7923 7033 info@motinternational.com motinternational.org

Oriel Davies

Helen Sear: *Lure* 2 Feb – 17 Apr Open 10–5, Mon – Sat

The Park, Newtown Powys SY16 2NZ T+44 168 662 5041 desk@orieldavies.org orieldavies.org

The Modern Institute

Simon Periton: The Rose Engine

23 Feb - 23 Mar Open 10-6, Mon-Fri; 12-6, Sat

14-20 Osborne Street, Glasgow G1 5QN +44 141 552 5988 mail@themoderninstitute.com themoderninstitute.com



Mother's Tankstation Aurelien Froment: 9 Intervals 16 Jan - 16 Feb Open 12-6, Thu - Sat G41-43 Watling Street, Ushers Island, Dublin 8 +353 1 671 7654

gallery@motherstankstation.com

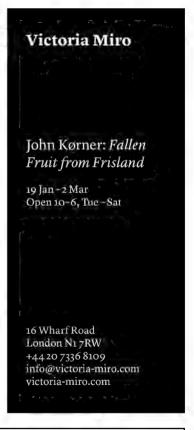
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museums.co.uk
portsmouthmuseums.co.uk

Sadie Coles

Angus Fairhurst: *Un-titled* 24 Jan – 16 Mar Open 10–6, Tue – Sat

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Arndt

Heinz Mack in Berlin – Works from 1958–2012 to 28 Feb Open Open 11–6, Tue – Sat

Potsdamer Strasse 96 10785 Berlin T+49 30 2061 3870 info@arndtberlin.com arndtberlin.com

Blain/Southern

Jannis Kounellis to 26 Jan Open 11–6, Tue – Sat

Potsdamer Strasse 77–87 10785 Berlin T +49 30 6449 31510 berlin@blainsouthern.com blainsouthern.com

Esther Schipper

Grönlund-Nisunen 2 Feb – 2 Mar Open 11–6, Tue – Sat

Schöneberger Ufer 65 D-10785 Berlin T+49 30 3744 33133 office@estherschipper.com estherschipper.com

Figge von Rosen Galerie

Javier Téllez: The Conquest of Mexico 26 Jan – 9 Mar Open 11–6, Tue – Fri; 12 – 5, Sat

Aachener Strasse 65 50674 Cologne T+49 221 2705 6840 info@figgevonrosen.com figgevonrosen.com

Isabella Bortolozzi

S.G. Rhodes: The Law of the Unknown Neighbor 24 Nov – 26 Jan Open 12 – 6, Tue – Sat

Schöneberger Ufer 61 10785 Berlin T +49 30 2639 4985 info@bortolozzi.com bortolozzi.com

Klosterfelde Gallery

Potsdamer Strasse 93 10785 Berlin T +49 30 2835 305 office@klosterfelde.de

Nolan Judin

Ian Hamilton Finlay: Inter Artes et Naturam 17 Nov – 16 Jan Open 11–6, Tue – Sat

Potsdamer Strasse 83 10785 Berlin T+49 30 39 40 48 40 info@nolan-judin.com nolan-judin.de

Sommer & Kohl

Kara Uzelman 12 Jan – 23 Feb Open 11–6, Wed – Sat

Kurfürstenstrasse 13/14 10785 Berlin T +49 30 2300 5581 info@sommerkohl.com sommerkohl.com

Supportico Lopez

Natalie Häusler: Case Mod 11 Jan – 16 Feb Open 11–6, Tue – Sat

Kurfürstenstrasse 14/b 10785 Berlin T+49 30 3198 9387 info@supporticolopez.com supporticolopez.com

Tanya Leighton

Bruce McLean: Time-Based Painting to 19 Jan Open 11–6, Tue – Sat

Kurfürstenstrasse 156 10785 Berlin T+49 30 22160 7770 info@tanyaleighton.com tanyaleighton.com

Galleries SOUTH AFRICA

SMAC

Johann Louw 31 Jan – 2 March Open 11–6, Tue – Sat

In-Fin Art Building Corner of Buitengracht & Buitensingel Street Cape Town 8001 T +27 21 422 5100 info@smacgallery.com smacgallery.com

SMAC

Simon Stone: Still Life 24 Jan – 9 March Open 11–6, Tue – Sat

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Exhibitions/UK

Rashid Johnson, South London Gallery
Abbas Akhavan, Delfina Foundation, London
Jean-Luc Moulène, Thomas Dane Gallery, London
Saad Qureshi, Gazelli Art House, London
Artist Placement Group 1966–79, Raven Row, London
Karen Mirza and Brad Butler, Waterside Contemporary, London
Shana Moulton, Gimpel Fils, London
Trevor Paglen, Lighthouse, Brighton

Exhibitions/USA

Barb Choit, Rachel Uffner Gallery, New York
Kevin Zucker, Eleven Rivington, New York
Diana Thater, David Zwirner, New York
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Wangechi Mutu, Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects

Exhibitions/Europe & Rest of the World

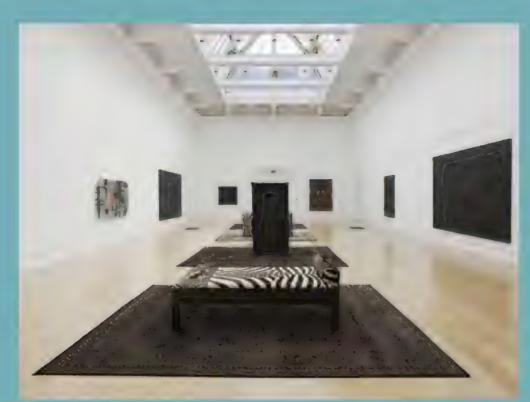
Filip Cenek, Hunt Kastner, Prague
Nasrin Tabatabai and Babak Afrassiabi, MACBA, Barcelona
Neïl Beloufa, Kunstraum Innsbruck
Johannes Wohnseifer, Galerie Johann König, Berlin
Yue Minjun, Fondation Cartier, Paris
Ann Cathrin November Høibo, Oslo Kunstforening
Stanley Brouwn, Konrad Fischer Galerie, Berlin
Curtis Mann/Valerio Carrubba, Galleria Monica De Cardenas, Milan
White Wall, Beirut Art Center
Collective Practice in China Now, UCCA, Beijing
30th Bienal de São Paulo, Parque do Ibirapuera, São Paulo

Books

Fear and Art in the Contemporary World, by Caterina Albano
Cycle of Violence, by Grayson Perry
Failure, A Writer's Life, by Joe Milutis
Alternative Histories, edited by Lauren Rosati and Mary Anne Staniszewski
Medieval Modern: Art out of Time, by Alexander Nagel
Vacuum Days, by Tim Etchells

Off the Record

New Year, New Gallery Girl. Old, dead artworld people



Rashid Johnson Shelter, 2012 (installation view). Photo: Andy Keate. Courtesy the artist, South London Gallery and Hauser & Wirth, London

Abbas Akhavan
Fountain, 2012, oscillating water
sprinkler, water, original linoleum
floor, dimensions variable. Photo:
Christa Holka. Courtesy the artist
and Delfina Foundation, London





Rashid Johnson: *Shelter*South London Gallery
28 September - 25 November

For his first London solo show, American artist Rashid Johnson transforms the SLG's main gallery into a strikingly original and dramatic space. The drama is carefully calculated, and the result is as deceptive as it is persuasive, gradually working its power over the audience like theatre.

Such an excessive transformation is not easily forgotten. Interestingly, the only comparable one that comes to mind is Chris Ofili's *The Upper Room*, which he filled with monkey-god paintings at Victoria Miro in 2002. Like Ofili, Johnson's work is inseparable from his heritage. Johnson, too, uses cultural references to blackness to seduce his audience, notably the sensual nature of the surface and texture of ethnic art, jazz music, and the symbolism of colour.

Where Ofili's chapellike veil hung respectfully over the gallery space, Johnson's creation is a mask, fully aware of its own cunning; where Ofili's *Room* united its audience in awe before confounding them with the subject of the shrine (a monkey), Johnson's *Shelter* works the opposite way.

On first entering, one is almost winded by the repetition of harsh black rectangles on the walls and floors, their shadowy edges echoing through a smashed mirror. *Shelter's* elaborate soft furnishings – Persian rugs and chaises longues covered in the skins of farmed zebras, no less – are arranged in a row down the centre of the room, the sofas turned hostilely on their sides to reveal scratch marks in their black bases.

At first, the eye shies perversely from the brute hangings on the walls, which are made from flooring instead of canvas (black bathroom tiles or burned red oak boards) in a confusion of familiar domestic functions. The gaze is drawn instead to the middle of the room, where the animal skins, sucking the light in the way an exquisite oil painting might, remind us of the indignities of luxury. Next to the bitterly and inescapably politicised black art on white walls, nature's immaculate patterns taunt us with their effortless harmony. As one acclimatises to the space, however, Johnson's deceptively bland wallhangings become skins themselves, each one subtly textured with symbolically rich materials like black soap, scarred with scratch marks or branded with hot metal.

The idea of a collective post-trauma clearly interests Johnson. Objects such as the Persian rugs and pot plants are references to Freud's therapy room, the origin of Western psychotherapy's model of an intimate healing space. They signal the idea that even though America has now voted its first black president in for another term, the scar left by the struggle of the last century is still itchy. The only colour in the room is a pile of red hardbacks: journalist Ellis Cose's The End of Anger (2011). The question of how we make the complex and ambiguous racial problems of today as compelling as they were in their very unambiguous recent past is at the heart of Cose's investigation. Johnson has given this same question a bitter but seductive flavour.

Ultimately, the themes of his show are familiar ones: beauty and skin. The only thing that really feels new is the grand, camp gestural confidence with which it is done. As in any good play, the drama lies in extreme exaggeration, and Johnson's manipulative fortitude is surely a cause for celebration.

FLORENCE WATERS



Abbas Akhavan: Study for a Garden Delfina Foundation, London 8 October - 20 November

Threats to humans and buildings alike coalesce in Abbas Akhavan's five interventions into Delfina's newly acquired shabby townhouse, before the gallery's imminent renovation to enlarge the foundation's current space next door.

A wall of Leylandii hedging, the traditional suburban privacy screen (and controversial seed of the UK's 2005 High Hedges Act), stalls the visitor in the reception area, suggesting visitation beyond to be trespass. It's a simple, beautifying winter-garden room divider, doubling as an enactment of the public/private threshold and nature's militarisation as defence. In the room behind, an altered drop-leaf dining table, decked out with rags and a watering can (a found-materials assemblage with a hint of foreboding), channels dripping water into a rubber masonry tub. A rust-coloured stain on the ceiling above suggests this might be due to a leak. Why is the ceiling leaking? Maybe it's due to this work's

correlative, an oscillating sprinkler violating a linoleum floor with a pool of water two floors up, as if a vicious gardener hell-bent on collapsing a ceiling rather than nurturing turf had performed a spot of domestic terrorism. But the two works' dialogue is conceptual, not physical. A damp-free floor of the building separates them, but it too has not been spared our guerrilla gardener. Vines sprout from the room's threadbare floral carpet, their scant trailing feeling more as though a florist has left in a hurry than a ruinous incursion of the natural world. In the basement, a lone dining table supports an ominous perfect cuboid of manure-rich earth, like a green-fingered minimalist's open grave. It's the show's weakest link, giving the former dining room an air of morgue-cum-torture-chamber, lacking the subtler dialogue with site the stronger works

Akhavan's interest in, as he puts it, "how sculpture can have territorial behaviour", and in the domestic as a site of latent violence, is invested in these ephemeral pieces which use canny DIY to disguise their technical ingenuity. The leak is a trompe l'oeil; the artist has rather created a slowly dribbling fountain in emulation of a waterboarding chamber (information 'leaked' by the artist in conversation, but concealed in the show's official framing). The sprinkler-lake bluffs its destructive desire by recycling its water from an unseen trough beneath the floorboards, mystifying the audience via the visual diversion of a hosepipe through the window. But this clever trickery, and the illusory 'as found' appearance of the works, render the artist's loaded intentions less visible among the building's polyphony of voices; those of its former (pensionable) office workers, and its current residents (whose presence is attested to by toothbrushes in bathrooms and Alpen in the kitchen, as the visitor stumbles about in search of the art). A visit is like stepping into a nascent and eerily empty Occupy squat, whose members are up for a bit of ruination-prerenovation. But perhaps this is apt, given the artist's keenness to present the political dimension of 'residency'.

Akhavan elegantly repurposes domestic items and gardener's tools as metaphorical tools of torture (both of humans and the home itself), but maybe the building gets its own back on these sculptures, by quieting their protestation and cloaking their magic.

JUSTIN JAECKLE



Jean-Luc Moulène Thomas Dane Gallery, London 22 November - 26 January

"I'm interested in both sides of the line of language," Jean-Luc Moulène told Tate's Chris Dercon during an interview at Modern Art Oxford last year. Poetry lay on one side, he said, mathematics on the other. "But I think art could be both," added the Reims-born artist, "because it's not language." Remember that when confronting Moulène's practice, which is formally ambulatory, somehow both clear and opaque, and consequently knotty. Literally so in his Blown Knot (2012) series of glass objects, produced during a residency at CIRVA, the Marseilles research centre for art and glassmaking. Bulbous blown forms in three colours (red, yellow and blue), wrapped complexly around each other and interfusing, these are at once deliriously aesthetic things - you can follow their soft transparent tunnels and glowing interplay of secondaries and tertiaries for a long time without getting bored and the showy yields of applied physics.

Moulène enjoys this doubling-up, his artworks often feeling like traps for the empirical and open-ended alike. A series of mirrors, placed near corners and accompanied by swatches of colourful Lycra pinned tightly by its own corners where the walls meet, are both informative (here's what a part of the world, ie you, looks like; here's what material under multidirectional stress looks like) and amorphous, for what's the relation between you and this colour? Five photographs taken in New York in 2012 – a tree, the interior of the Strand bookshop, a pretty girl toting a mobile phone, foodstuffs laid out on Chinese newsprint, a half-blackened building whose burned frontage and plywood-blocked windows make the image

look semisolarised – are locally informative yet don't add up to a worldview. As the handout points out, they reenact classic pictorial strategies (still life, landscape, portrait), but they're highly specific. A categorical form meets an emblem of the world's irreducible variety, even as found in just one city.

For his previous show here, in 2007, Moulène exhibited Products of Palestine (2002-4), photographs of 58 consumer products that, due to sanctions, never leave the Gaza Strip and West Bank. That's as loaded a subject as you might find, but it's also a metaphor for circulation. The objects can't move, but an image of them can. Seemingly fixed things can move in diverse ways (here's where glass and stretchy material meet on the metaphoric plane): in the imagination, for example. So Moulène's two tastefully defaced advertisements for high-end watches, one from Le Monde and the other from The New York Times, both titled Ralph Lauren's (2012) - spokes in black or red felt tip pen radiating outward from pictured clockfaces - are at once comprehensible and suggest an attitude to luxury goods. Nearby, meanwhile, is Trou d' A380 (2012), a model aeroplane retrofitted with bars erupting from the wings; from the crossbar dangles a vaguely nooseshaped twist of green wire. None of these works are exactly indicting; they foxtrot around critique, suggesting but not reifying an attitude to the thing modified.

If there's a model here for that equalising of prompt and constraint, it's Moulène's pair of iron birdcages, each filled by a glass object fitted near-perfectly to its dimensions, bubbling outward through the open cage door and the circular aperture at the top. The technics involved in fabricating such things make the brain hurt to contemplate, and they're emphatically part of the work. But everything else about *For Birds 1* and 2 (2012) resides, tantalisingly, on the other side of 'the line of language'.

MARTIN HERBERT



Saad Qureshi: Other Crescents, Other Moons Gazelli Art House, London 2 November – 22 December

As a British Asian, Saad Qureshi is particularly interested in what it means to be other or to belong in a multicultural society. Christian and Islamic narratives appear to provide significant source material for his enquiry; here he proposes the Tower of Babel as an ideological blueprint for Other Crescents, Other Moons. Qureshi describes this series of figurative sculptures and drawings as 'mindscapes'; derelict model worlds based on other people's recollections of places he is also familiar with. The view is often dark, in every sense, but Qureshi's handling of miniature matter is exquisite. This combination, for the most part, is incongruous enough to keep one in touch with the artist's role as mediator and the notion of memory as an evocative but unstable interpretive tool.

All works in the exhibition are derived from a series of interviews Qureshi conducted after posting ads calling for residents to donate descriptions of places he visited. Eastern architectural references aside, it is not clear where he actually went and over what time period. But given that Qureshi's interest here is the selective nature of memory, one can understand a reticence to tie the process down with too many facts. The ground floor space is dominated by the work of the exhibition title: a huge black doughnut-shaped sculpture that appears to have crashed to the ground and twisted into a partial sphere on impact. The scale is impressive enough to suggest military or industrial purpose, but not monumental to the point of ruling it out as an elaborate theatre prop.

Shadow play on the surrounding walls brings one's attention to tiny structures and scrubby black swatches of Astroturf adhered to the sculpture's surface. They could be shrunken oil-field paraphernalia from a bizarre Airfix kit. Delicate carbon-paper drawings hung nearby, meanwhile, might function as the plans for assembly. Upstairs, a series of tiny models depicting scenes of architectural decay and environmental damage (all coated in heavy layers of black paint) sit atop teetering assemblages of wheels, wood and drawers. Qureshi's use of materials to convey graveyards and falling power lines, for example, is compelling, but the

supporting structures seem rather mannered in comparison. A slick of wood varnish visible over a screw puts an uncomfortable gloss on the makeshift associations here: with Arte Povera and an inventiveness born of extreme deprivation.

The perpetual shift, from work to work, between notions of conflict and child's play, invites obvious comparison with Jake and Dinos Chapman's Hell (2000). In this case, however, the lack of any discernible human narrative means that violence remains the metaphorical elephant rather than the dominant sensibility in the room. Based on oral accounts of places, reinterpreted by the artist, these are not sites or craft that necessarily have or continue to exist. Yet like the Tower of Babel, a failed scheme to build a city that would reach the heavens, Other Crescents, Other Moons embodies aspects of both the folly and genius of human invention. How the viewer projects her own narrative into each manifestation of a place, and how much of this may be based on secondhand media or other source material, is an important element of the encounter. For however 'elsewhere' each environment might appear, personal points of reference can always be found: from the highspec curvilinear forms of Zaha Hadid's buildings, to the burnt remnants of Brighton Pier before it fell into the sea. Whether or not these arrive in the mind as a result of the accounts as recorded, the artist's reworking of them or the individual's desire to locate themselves within the work is open to question.

REBECCA GELDARD

Jean-Luc Moutène Ralph Lauren's, 2012, red felt pen on printed newspaper (Le Monde, Friday 30 April 2012), 47 x 32 cm. ⊕ the artist. Courtesy Thomas Dane Gallery, London





Saad Qureshi
Other Crescents, Other
Moons, 2012 (installation view).

© Gazelli Art House, London

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David Hall (see Artist Placement Group) TV Interruptions, 1971, 16mm transferred to video, digitised. Photo: Marcus J. Leith. Courtesy the artist

Karen Mirza and Brad Butler Deep State, 2012, HD video, 45 min. Commissioned by Film and Video Umbrella, London. Courtesy Waterside Contemporary, London





The Individual and the Organisation: Artist Placement Group 1966-79 Raven Row, London 27 September - 16 December

When Barbara Steveni and John Latham founded Artist Placement Group in Britain in 1966, they foresaw a new kind of patronage. As the catalogue for this show states, artists would 'relocate their practices from the studio to the industrial workplace'. They would have a completely open brief and be 'paid a wage by the host organisation regardless of the material output'.

The feasibility studies that preceded each placement were a vital part of that output, chronicling the often antagonistic relationship between artist and host. During a 1976 placement with the UK's Department of Health and Social Security, for example, Ian Breakwell explored the deleterious effect of institutional architecture on psychiatric care. At Rampton high-security psychiatric hospital he photographed the view from a locked cell, seeing things from an inmate's perspective, in preparation for a slideshow at a 'Special Hospitals Internal Seminar'. That slideshow isn't included here - presumably due to the Official Secrets Act Breakwell had to sign as a condition of his placement - so the feasibility study is the only record of its existence.

These chunky ring-binders of reports and correspondence are forbidding documents, but they repay scrutiny, especially when - as with Breakwell - they speak for an absent visual component. Only occasionally in this show, however, is the visual intended to speak for itself. Seven monitors play David Hall's TV Interruptions (7 TV Pieces) (1971), originally broadcast alongside commercial breaks during his placement with Scottish Television. The most effective, Tap Piece, shows water pouring from a tap into a glass tank, filmed side-on so that the TV looks like it's filling up. Normally we stare through the screen, into 'TV world'; here our gaze rests on its surface, as a traditionally fast-paced medium is retarded, its obsession with speedy communication blithely mocked.

Garth Evans's 1969 placement at British Steel Corporation is represented by a silent film showing objects found at a fabrication works, functionless constructions made by welding apprentices that Evans documents as 'readymade sculptures'. You learn this only by donning headphones and listening to an audio interview with British Steel publicist Christopher Patey, the contextualisation coming from an industryinsider rather than from the artist.

Not all placements were this harmonious, and the general impression is of artists actively seeking friction. George Levantis got plenty on the three ships (an ocean liner, a tanker and a cargo ship) he boarded in 1974 during a placement with Ocean Fleets Ltd. His refusal to give art classes on one voyage 'upset the captain a great deal'; on another, installations made from scavenged materials were thrown overboard by his disgruntled shipmates. At one point, when acting as an informal counsellor for the crew, he makes himself a mock naval uniform; a fitting metaphor for APG, whose aim was to challenge received notions of the artist as bohemian outsider without forsaking art's sense of vocational alterity.

SEAN ASHTON



Karen Mirza and Brad Butler: *Deep State*Waterside Contemporary, London
2, 3, 6–10 November

Karen Mirza and Brad Butler use Deep State (2012), a 45-minute HD video, to project leftwing political provocations, but give depth to the rabble-rousing with a series of invocations of historical precedents within the medium. These twin themes are apparent from the start: in the opening sequence the videomakers both quote David Hall's 1971 TV Interruptions (7 TV Pieces) with the use of a burning television (though this one displays the word 'occupy') and intercut the reference with short clips of riot footage, images of socialist flyers and a shot of a promotional poster for The Iron Lady (2011), but with the photo of Meryl Streep as Margaret Thatcher defaced with a Hitler moustache and 'I killed the British working class' scrawled across her cheek. Even before the title page appears – it includes the verbal note that "this thriller is inspired by true events" – a whispered voice begins an often densely abstract narration, scripted by fantasy writer China Miéville, that weaves itself in and out of Mirza and Butler's twin political and arthistorical interests.

Butler and Mirza then deluge the viewer with a further collage of archive protest footage. This adrenaline-inducing torrent is broken up occasionally by various performed interludes: a woman makes a series of jerky movements and guttural vocalisations against a neutral white background, for example (taken from another of Mirza and Butler's recent videos, Hold Your Ground, 2012), or (as a further reference to an older seminal work by another artist) a man runs towards the camera, the scene using the same frame and camera angle as a shot from Owen Land's Remedial Reading Comprehension (1970). For the most part, however, the film is given over to depictions of communal anger. These range from grainy Pathé News films of flat-capped hordes battling custodian-helmeted police, to mobile-phone footage from the Arab Spring. Wrecked cars, police beatings, street battles, kettles, banners, graffiti, makeshift missiles and masked bandits recur as motifs regardless of geographical or historical context. Strung together, with the circumstances behind each protest opaque, these politically complicated events become somewhat aestheticised. There is a feeling of nostalgia evident too, even towards the footage of relatively recent protests.

Some of the clips are shown as projections, in turn filmed by the artists, often with a single audience figure silhouetted in the foreground. There is the suggestion that we are removed from this form of protest, that we can only look in on it and experience these fights through the rectangular framing of moving image. At one point Miéville's narrator notes that "TV centres are like a fortress. They know what they sit on." Later the script intones, "TV and cinema are occupied by the enemy, and I feel like an occupied territory." The Egyptian art-activist group Mosireen - whose practice involves broadcasting and disseminating self-filmed protest footage provided Mirza and Butler with some of the protest imagery used, and it is hard not to compare the duo's work, here confined to a gallery, to that collective. Rather than seeking to reclaim the streets, Mirza and Butler seem to view broadcast media as a more relevant territory for contest. Yet unlike Hall's TV Interruptions, and unlike Mosireen's work, Deep State - and only because of the context of its display - doesn't quite manage to practise what it preaches. Mirza and Butler, who were nominated for the 2012 Jarman Award, won a commission for Channel 4's Random Acts strand on British terrestrial television, so perhaps their work will find its natural home in the near future.

OLIVER BASCIANO



Shana Moulton

Pristiq, 2012, pharma logo felt wall hanging, bamboo rail, 178 x 137 cm.

Courtesy Gimpel Fils, London



Trevor Paglen
They Watch the Moon, c-type
print, 2012. © the artist.
Courtesy Galerie Thomas
Zander, Cologne, and Altman
Siegel Gallery, San Francisco



Kevin Zucker Rain (Paradise Cove Towers), 2011, acrylic and toner on canvas, 141 x 185 cm. Courtesy Eleven Rivington, New York



Barb Choit
Untitled Faded Beauty (Asian Cinema), 2012, digital c-print, 102 x 76 cm. Courtesy the artist and Rachel Uffner Gallery, New York



Shana Moulton: Prevention Gimpel Fils, London 9 October - 17 November

The first series of South Park, aired in 1997, featured an episode in which the young Stan's grandfather makes the case for his own euthanasia by locking him in a pitch-dark room and forcing him to listen to the sounds of Irish musician Enva's Orinoco Flow on repeat. This, he says, is what old age feels like. Having grown up in a trailer park for senior citizens called Whispering Pines, the American artist Shana Moulton, I would guess, would not need such a lesson in the experiences of the elderly, and this background, alongside a stint as a 'house organiser', has clearly given her a highly developed sense of the genuine surrealities relating to the faith that people put in objects, actions and remedies in her home country.

Moulton has investigated such subjects over the years in her performances and videos, which chart the experiences of her alter ego, Cynthia, a perpetual patient plagued by ill health and minor complaints who behaves and dresses rather older than her years, and who searches for answers in countercultural and alternative sources. Moulton's films comedically splice the hackneyed imagery of joss-stick-and-crystals spiritualism, the crummy aesthetics of cheap ads for haemorrhoid creams and diet pills, digitally rendered psychedelia and the soundscape of, yes, a synthy, quasi-spiritual choral music reminiscent of Enya, which conveys a kind of purposeful, searching quest for enlightenment and wellbeing.

Moulton's exhibition at Gimpel Fils, which takes its name from an American health magazine title, conveys the foreboding sense of a lifelong battle against death and ill health. We are introduced to the artist's concerns with the assistance of a set of sculptures, each titled Medical Dreamcatcher (all works 2012). These are rather chilling items, each made from a stability crutch or Zimmer frame that has been wrapped in stripes of coloured wool and hung with pill dispensers and beads to create an object that might be a dreamcatcher, a spiritual staff or an occult sculpture. Fear of death, illness and disability, these suggest, leave us prey to the suggestions of magic, charms and miracle cures, which conceal the ugly truth and the grey, soft plastic feet of standard-issue walking sticks.

The central works are two films: Lyrica, in which a headless goddess-type figure carries out painful-looking treatments on Cynthia's back, which has clearly been rendered in a soft sculptural material such as clay or plasticine; and the stronger Restless Leg Saga, which sees Cynthia lying in bed plagued by 'restless legs syndrome', watching commercials advertising supplements and cures for this complaint and reading magazines that do the same. The logos of pharmaceutical and health-supplement brands often feature abstract imagery of figures dancing or jumping in glee, and in a genuinely funny sequence, Moulton brings these figures to life as soft spongy characters that dance in a sinister fashion in front of our poor protagonist. These dancing, leaping bodies more effectively represent the pharmaceutical and supplement industries (described by Moulton as 'omnipresent and aggressive') as powerful, embodied deities that promote fear and inadequacy. Funny as the films are, the real quest here is one of knowing one's enemy. As Stan's grandfather knows, it's not death, but all the rest of it.

LAURA MCLEAN-FERRIS



Trevor Paglen: Geographies of Seeing Lighthouse, Brighton 6 October - 4 November

'It's the oldest question of all, George. Who can spy on the spies?' So asks Control of Smiley in John le Carré's Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy (1974). Is there a real-life version of the omniscient John Tracy, stranded in splendid isolation on Thunderbird 5? Trevor Paglen looks a strong candidate for this mission, should he choose to accept it. High-quality surveillance work preferred. This show provides the evidence and features three aspects of Paglen's work, a video and examples from two photographic projects. As with the paranoid aesthetic of novelists Thomas Pynchon and Don DeLillo, or the pencil diagrams of Mark Lombardi, we are firmly encamped in a geography of dangerous times. This is a place viewed by the Eye of Providence where the soundtrack is SIGINT - signals intelligence. And where the motto of our observers might be altitudo cum habitus – to consider from on high. This, we learn, Paglen has gleaned from the leaked insignia of a 1998 launch of a classified spacecraft out of Cape Canaveral.

The Limit Telephotography series has Paglen sneakily use cameras and astronomical telescopes to uncover classified government sites. These are often in the deserts of the Western states, miles from anywhere. So we get N5177C at Gold Coast Terminal (2007), taken in Nevada at a distance of one mile. Or Large Hangars and Fuel Storage (2005), again taken from Nevada, a shot of the Tonopah Test Range at a distance of 18 miles. There is something of Thomas Demand's autistic stare at work in these pictures. What's going on here? We don't know for sure, but you can bet it will end badly for someone. And there's the voyeuristic frisson of seeing what we are not meant to see. We have been let in on a secret. These are horizontal ground views, what Google Maps will never capture.

In contrast there is The Other Night Sky series, vertical photographs of the heavens above, polluted by our space junk. KEYHOLE/ IMPROVED CRYSTAL Near Scorpio (Optical Reconnaissance Satellite; USA 129) (2007) is an image of a satellite that can apparently provide a linear resolution of approximately 10cm, enough to detect a human face, if not your new paradigm spectacles. A white streak traverses a warm orange-coloured liquefied sky, as vividly sensational as Frederic Edwin Church's Cotopaxi (1862). KEYHOLE IMPROVED CRYSTAL from Glacier Point (Optical Reconnaissance Satellite; USA 186) (2008) captures more rotational scratches of orbital activity above Yosemite. We are immediately reminded of Ansel Adams or Eadweard Muybridge perching above the void. And here another dimension of Paglen's output is suggested. He appears to be redefining the imagery of America's Manifest Destiny. This, of course, was a catchphrase of American expansionism from the mid-nineteenth century. Could Paglen be considered, then, as a late transcendentalist? Vast prospects of the view from on high are indeed what we get here, the sublime bespoiled, corrupted by incipient violence. One might see him as an inheritor of Church or Thomas Cole, albeit one who rejects a metaphorical approach to war. There is no hint of redemption. For Paglen, the agency and its friends are modern Davy Crockett types - minus the cute coonskin hat - bent on conquest. This is reinforced by the video Drone Vision (2010), which shows intercepted footage by an amateur 'satellite hacker' of drone surveillance. Drones are controlled by operatives thousands of miles away from the ground being viewed. Grainy shots of farmers in tractors way down below, oblivious of their watchers in the sky. Whisper it; Paglen is peeping on the peepers. This review will selfdestruct in five seconds.

JOHN QUIN



Barb Choit: Fade Diary
Rachel Uffner Gallery, New York
28 October - 23 December

Like many of us Millennials, Barb Choit has a thing for the 1980s. For her hilarious 2009 solo exhibition *Nagel Fades*, the artist purchased a collection of kitschy Patrick Nagel posters and subjected them to bleach baths, lamps and brilliant! – a tanning bed, turning that tacky sunning device into a fabulously photographic apparatus. Nagel's graphic, art deco-derived illustrations of female figures clad in spandex, dangly earrings and bulky sunglasses were thus prematurely patinated, their comically outré, *Dynasty*-like digs discoloured and faded to the point of illegibility.

For Fade Diary, Choit drops her white-trash light source for, boringly, the sun. In the process, her work loses much of its camp appeal. Walking through New York City neighbourhoods, particularly Brooklyn's Bushwick and Greenpoint, Choit photographed faded posters, maps and advertisements in barbershops, hair salons, travel agencies and other shop windows. These often forlorn sites are alluded to by a reproduction neon sign in the gallery window reading '12 Photos & Fades' in luminescent blue.

Barbershop Fade #8, #1 and #2 (all works 2012) feature gridded portraits of outmoded male hairstyles from the late 1980s. Variously faded to light blue and brown, stained and torn, the photos are also closely cropped so that reflections of the street caught by the shop windows blend in with the images. In Barbershop Fade #7, a glass door included in the frame further abstracts Choit's images, as the gridded portraits reflect and fold into each other like an endlessly repeating pattern. Other works feature objects. Ajax and Colgate toothpaste figure prominently in Faded Object #1 (With Bleach Alternative), while nearly unidentifiable paper ephemera and straws comprise King City.

Turning to outdated conceptions of glamour, *Untitled Faded Beauty (Heart Pendant)* and *Untitled Faded Beauty (NYPD #2)* are more straightforward c-prints of advertisements. With pursed lips and slender arms, the former work's

model is nearly bleached out to a clean cream; while the latter, with impossibly pouffy hair, looks at the viewer from within her angled storefront window. Resembling Richard Prince's female archetypes, these ads are presented by Choit nearly as-is, as if to trouble them, though they don't really. Their blurry images and surface effects defeat the purpose.

The artist's perceptual studies of store windows are perhaps more evocative of Eugène Atget's obsessively shot Parisian storefronts (as mentioned in the show's press release) than of Prince's appropriations. But with their canny blending of consumer goods and street reflections, Choit's photographs are so redolent of Atget that one wonders why she made them in the first place. After all, it's one thing to evoke an artistic influence but another to ape it entirely. The photographs in Fade Diary may be beautiful and visually striking, but they do little to differentiate themselves from their aesthetic forebear. Rather than any meaningful commentary on gentrification (as the gallery claims), the work comes off as vacant as its models' stares and, regrettably, as redundant as Atget was original.

DAVID EVERITT HOWE



Kevin Zucker: *No Hotel*Eleven Rivington, New York
9 November - 22 December

Without knowing anything about the exhibition, it's easy to walk into Kevin Zucker's No Hotel and imagine it's a collection of paintings and letters by a contemporary traveller living like Gustave Flaubert or Paul Theroux. Consisting of five sets of texts written on single sheets of hotel stationery, which are laid out in glass display cases, and nine acrylic and toner paintings of luxury tropical resorts rendered in pixels that recall pointillist landscapes, the show has a distinctly romantic, peripatetic tone.

Closer examination ruins the illusion. The stationery, which was collected from locations as diverse as Anchorage and Abu Dhabi, is actually drawn from the blank sheets included in Martin Kippenberger's third and final volume of 'Hotel' sketches. The texts, written by Zucker and inkjet-printed in blue ink, are clinical

descriptions of photographs he found online. The paintings are digital transfers of composite images of fake vacation destinations made by the artist from a combination of digital 3D models and photographs. Together they are best described as the manifestation of a Tumblr blog devoted to travel: unrelated glimpses of faraway places sourced from all over the Internet, completely divorced from actual experience, and denied the clarity of a cohesive narrative.

Still, one hopes to piece together a story. The show is divided between Eleven Rivington's two locations, which are a few blocks apart from one another on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. The smaller space is dominated by Rain (Bayview Landing Resort & Hotel) (2011-12), a monumental canvas (224 x 305 cm) that depicts a manicured courtyard between two towers of guest rooms. Aggregated from spats of dots, which show the way the landscape would look if it were rendered by streaks of rain, the figurative qualities of the composition melt into abstraction when inspected up close. Dissatisfied with the lack of information in the banal image, one searches for a Sophie Calle-like narrator in the letters who might provide context. '25610_4.JPG A grid of four photographs, each depicting a different sunset, all of them black and white,' reads one piece of stationery from the Hotel Alfonso XIII in Seville. Neither the wording nor the location matches any of the visual cues in the painting.

Six similar hotel paintings, all bearing titles that begin with *Rain*, followed by the name of a fake resort, are grouped together in the front room of the second location. Their differences are marked by slight variations of colour and setting. By the time one gets to yet more cases of letters in the back, the promise of a narrative has lost its hold, and the texts are easily glanced over. On the Internet, randomness is expected. In an exhibition, it leads to frustration; not being able to rapidly click through to the next distraction leads to feelings of claustrophobia and, ultimately, boredom.

BRIENNE WALSH



Diana Thater Chernobyl, 2010 (installation view), six projectors, six media players and Lee filters. Courtesy David Zwirner, New York



David Ostrowski

F(Jung, Brutal, Gutausehend),
2012, acrylic, lacquer, adhesive
foil and cotton on canvas, wood,
221 x 171 cm. Courtesy the artist
and Ltd Los Angeles



Diana Thater: *Chernobyl*David Zwirner, New York
9 November - 22 December

'Postapocalyptic' deserves retirement. It's had a long, hard-working life, and yet still doesn't complain when it's called up to pull the deadweight of descriptive laziness and capitulations to cliché. Take your pick of the ruined, the abandoned, the murdered land, but apocalypse will never make a genuine appearance on earth. As a concept, it's total. Whereas our human imaginations are merely regional: we kill ourselves by the square foot, never all at once. Which is why nothing comes after the end.

Diana Thater's Chernobyl (2010), installed in David Zwirner's easternmost gallery space on one of the many Sandy-ravaged strips of West Chelsea, reminds us just how limited our imaginations are. Filmed in the 'exclusion zone', a 30-kilometre no-man's-land that rings the 1986 meltdown site, Thater's video reveals a remarkably vibrant sanctuary, filled with plants and animals, all undoubtedly irradiated, yet all very much alive after a generation or two or three. Centred on the wreckage of an old theatre in Pripyat, the company town whose onetime residents managed and cared for the reactor, Thater's installation recreates the geometries of the theatre's walls and gives us a panoramic loop that changes like Chernobyl's diminished seasons.

The point of Thater's piece is not to draw us once again into the depths of self-hatred whenever the subject of nuclear power and its ecological disasters are broached (though it does that too). Instead, its designs are on time itself, and the fact that it doesn't 'pass' (another cliché)

but is 'lived' and lived in. The zone around Chernobylis occupied by much wildlife, including, amazingly, horses, specifically Przewalski's horses, the last surviving subspecies of wild horses, which were introduced to the area because only there could they exist relatively undisturbed by humans. There are people too. Mortuary workers who care for the remains of the dead – actually, only half-dead – nuclear hulk and its burial ground.

'Half-dead' may not be right either. Plutonium-239 decays at a rate of 50 percent every 24,000 years. That's a stability no human civilisation can hope to achieve (the Holocene itself only dates to about a 21 percent drawdown of the isotope). The cesium in the ground, which was meant to disappear after only 60 years, looks to be taking five times longer. These are historical scales and geological scales, both human and inhuman, and Thater's video implicates them in their invisibility, just as a shot of the moon rising over a statue of Lenin in the video's opening sequence implicates the ideology – equally invisible – that has irradiated us all.

JONATHAN T.D. NEIL



David Ostrowski: From Bad to Worse
Ltd Los Angeles
18 October - 24 November

The day I visit David Ostrowski's exhibition, it's raining. The unusually inclement weather seems appropriate for these battered, defeated-looking paintings. I am reminded of the terrible storm that hit New York recently. Ostrowski's work corresponds to images of Chelsea-gallery employees hauling drenched canvases out of waterlogged crates.

This exhibition, however, belongs not to water but to the dryness of a Los Angeles summer. The Cologne-based Ostrowski undertook a residency in the city, hosted by Ltd Los Angeles, the result of which is this suite of paintings. Is it fair to correlate these scuffed and scarred canvases, made with acrylic, lacquer, spraypaint, sheets of paper and cotton, with the locus of their production? Maybe not. They are, after all, part of the *F* series of paintings that the artist has

developed over recent years, and are remarkably similar to works (some with the same titles) that he is showing in an almost simultaneous exhibition at BolteLang, Zurich, reportedly made before visiting California.

However, when confronted by paintings as devoid of content as these, one is tempted to reach for affinities with the context of their creation in order to flesh out their references. The dirty black lines that Ostrowski makes with a spray can might, to some viewers, evoke the smog of a car exhaust. The worn black surface of a painting such as *F* (*Dann Lieber Nein*) (all works 2012) could be compared to tarmac, and its butteryellow frame a chromatic tribute to the Southern Californian sunshine.

Such readings are obviously superficial and could just as easily be matched with any sunny but traffic-blighted city. Nevertheless, there is a sense here that even Ostrowski himself isn't prepared to disregard it entirely. A poster for the exhibition reproduces a grainy photograph of a man spraying black lines on a wall from a moving Jeep. The medium of smoky spraypaint is one that other artists – notably Sterling Ruby – have deployed as a specific signifier of Los Angeles grime and proprietary vandalism.

One might also turn to the wealth of literature offered by the gallery. Alongside an essay, an interview and the standard press release – itself appended by an exchange between Jerry and George from the sitcom *Seinfeld* about their idea for a (TV) show about 'nothing' – is a double-sided page of aphorisms by the bard of Los Angeles, Larry David.

'I don't think anyone is interested in reading about my emotional state. It's not even interesting to me,' says David. Despite oblique disavowals such as this, Ostrowski's painting is rich with emotion, and has frequent moments of surprise and beauty. A strip of iridescent adhesive foil taped to F (Jung, Brutal, Gutausehend) is one such epiphany. But Ostrowski seems determined to undermine himself. F (Ian Tits) presents the only representational imagery in the show: scrawled breasts, straight from the toilet wall. Its imbecility seems contrived, a forced fulfilment of the show's prophetic title, From Bad to Worse. It doesn't have to be as bad as all that.

JONATHAN GRIFFIN



Eva and Franco Mattes aka 0100101110101101.ORG (see Art in the Age of Truthiness) Catt (Fake Cattelan Sculpture), 2010, taxidermy cat and bird, polyurethane resin, cage, wood. Photo: Rinaldo Capra. Courtesy Inman Gallery, Houston



Wangechi Mutu
All the Way Up, All the Way
Out, 2012, collage on linoleum,
194 x 139 cm. Photo: Robert
Wedemeyer. Courtesy Susanne
Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects



More Real? Art in the Age of Truthiness SITE Santa Fe 8 July - 6 January

Paul Valéry may have touched on something essentially modern when he guipped, 'Truth needs the lie - otherwise how could one define it?' Indeed, a fascination with the construction of reality has defined our era as much as anything. Recently, however, the increasing technological mediation of perception and the return of zombie versions of postmodern ideas (Karl Rove: 'When we act, we create our own reality') have accelerated what Stephen Colbert calls truthiness: defined by the American Dialect Society as 'the quality of preferring concepts or facts one wishes to be true, rather than concepts or facts known to be true'. This is the premise of More Real? Art in the Age of Truthiness, currently at SITE Santa Fe and travelling to the Minneapolis Institute of Arts. Spanning the George W. Bush years, the artworks in More Real? present fictions as if they were true, forge amalgams of the two and test the viewer's powers of discernment by soliciting credulity and scepticism in equal measure.

Some hoaxes convey difficult realities: the Yes Men achieved real results when their fake 2004 announcement that Dow Chemical would compensate victims of the 1984 Bhopal chemical disaster caused the company's stock to fall by \$2 billion. The truth came out in the Yes Men's subsequent fake retraction: 'Dow will not commit any funds to compensate and treat 120,000 Bhopal residents who require lifelong care... Dow cannot do anything that goes against its bottom line unless forced to by law.' (Union Carbide, the majority owner of the Bhopal plant at the time, made a legal settlement with the Indian government in 1989.) The Yes Men's New York Post Special Edition (2009), published on the eve of a UN meeting on climate change and declaring, 'We're Screwed. What you're not being told: official City report predicts massive climate catastrophes, public health disasters', takes on painful relevance in the wake of Hurricane Sandy and fits right in with Bloomberg Businessweek's recent headline: 'It's Global Warming, Stupid.'

Some worry that describing these parafictions as art creates a catchall for unserious or purposeless activity. Yet other works aestheticise the real with equally disquieting implications. Long-exposure photographs of the night sky by Trevor Paglen conjure Van Gogh's anguished nocturnes, but titles such as Nine Reconnaissance Satellites over the Sonora Pass (2008) collide cosmic and technological pathos. The aesthetics of the sublime also conflates human and natural drama in Walid Raad's recordings of the sun setting beyond a Beirut pier, footage that was purportedly captured by a surveillance camera during the Lebanese Civil War (I Only Wish That I Could Weep, 2001-02). Beauty in these works is both complicit and redemptive.

Painting is conspicuously absent from the exhibition, but it is conjured by Eve Sussman and the Rufus Corporation's elaborate video 89 Seconds at Alcázar (2004). In a cinematic staging of Velázquez's Las Meninas (1656) – a work that famously implicates the viewer in the irresolute pictorial space of the Habsburg palace – Sussman and Rufus bring the enigmatic masterpiece to life. But what is more real, the video virtualisation or the painting whose only stable subject matter is representation per se? By calling on the deep time of painting, 89 Seconds at Alcázar reminds us that art, like reality, has long challenged our powers of perception.

LIAM CONSIDINE



Wangechi Mutu: Nitarudi Ninarudi I Planto Return I Am Returning Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects 3 November - 22 December

Isak Dinesen observes in *Out of Africa* (1937) that to visit Kikuyu *shambas* is to encounter 'the hind part of a little old woman raking in her soil, like the picture of an ostrich which buries her head in the sand'. The line is an acute picturesque detail, but the ostrich simile is a bit tortured. There's poetry in the ostrich being unable to fly, but the clumsy bird does not quite convey the lifetime of trauma and abuse, of ingratitude and

violence and organised discrimination that these women endure. So excessive is their trouble that the bodies of these women become, over time, permanently bent.

Wangechi Mutu is Kikuyu, born in Nairobi, and although one cannot completely locate her work in human-rights violations against women in Kenya and all over the world, the distortion of the old woman could serve as a partial starting point. The historical pain present in such bodies, in families and hierarchical structures, bursts forth in Mutu's work, along with the paradox that these same distortions also produce a grotesque eroticism, a searing sexuality that steps forth and declares itself.

Mutu's art lives this paradox, and collage is her expressive vehicle. The best piece in her Susanne Vielmetter show, A Funny Kind of Scent (all works 2012), is an incredible gnarl of twisted beauty, a fascinating creature assertive and confident against a field of stars. Like a blocky and voluminous Picassoid form, Mutu's woman has substantial visual weight. She is dressed up and accented with a fashionable scarf, yet stares intensely out of an eagle eye, a mongrel of hair and deformity, unselfconscious. Against that night sky, the woman is unexpectedly less a nightmare than a simple fact.

Mutu cannot quite translate the heat of her small works to match the scale of her larger installations in sculpture, painting and video. In her Kibaba installation, the circle of female elders is quite arresting at first, each wrapped in Beuys felt and wearing individual masks and hairstyles. However, the unavoidable feeling of festivalism blocks the provocative details of the piece. Circling the women hang wine bottles dripping into a number of bowls. If Kibaba comes from the Swahili proverb Haba na haba hujaza kibaba ('Little by little, fills the pot'), then this congregation of powerful women lends itself nicely to a space charged against the violence of domestic alcoholism and the terrible rituals of female circumcision.

Mutu's oft-repeated throne motif, which appears in Vielmetter's final gallery, deserves to be defended against any claims that it is 'dully generic'. The throne is a potent and sometimes trite symbol evocative of hierarchical societies, but for Mutu, it's specific – it alludes to the seat of the Kikuyu god Ngai residing atop Mount Kenya and the chauvinist contemporary society controlling the lush tea and coffee foothills below. Mutu's thrones are spidery, needling forward as if on stilts, lecherous basins from where all trauma issues. Hair and ribbons twist through these unholy chairs, like fragments of women torn apart by sexist laws and time-honoured prejudices.

ED SCHAD

Filip Cenek Overlay, 2012 (installation view). Photo: Ondrej Polak. Courtesy Hunt Kastner, Prague





Nasrin Tabatabai and Babak Afrassiabi Seep, 2012, still from one of the installation videos. Work produced by the MACBA Foundation, Barcelona. © the artists



Filip Cenek: Overlay Hunt Kastner, Prague 14 November - 21 December

"It's a somewhat minimal show," says gallerist Kacha Kastner of Filip Cenek's solo exhibition *Overlay*. Her need to state this fact is understandable. Given Cenek's background in audiovisual studies, cinema projectionist training and interest in nonlinear narratives and indeterminacy, one might well imagine a kind of Michael Snow meets Tony Conrad scenario. In truth his method is much more pared down minimal.

The show is composed of one black-andwhite photographic image, repeated three times: next to a winding path by the shore, a child sleeps on a thin mattress, shaded by a grove of trees. A landing (fishing) net is propped up close by and he is surrounded by beach sandals and knapsacks; the personal debris of a family's day by the sea. Two iterations of this image, identical in scale at 100 x 130 cm, are propped against the main wall of the gallery. In front of them stand two projectors, one constant with its clinical white light, the other suffusing the second print with warmer, softer light; the intimate glow of nostalgia. If you stay long enough, you'll notice that this light fades out, shuts off and comes back on in a cycle of seemingly arbitrary intervals.

On the wall adjacent, the photograph is dramatically enlarged, reconfigured as wallpaper; here it takes on a darker, grainier quality, sombre and documentary, prompting you to step back, gain some distance and clarity. But the piece is not lit, except for whatever of Prague's bleak winter sun makes its way through the front windows. Framed by the light radiating from the space behind it, the image is further obscured as you move away from it. This, along with the fact that one is forced to squat on the floor in order to get a close look at the two smaller prints, seems to stand testament to Cenek's own reputed 'discomfort' within traditional gallery spaces.

The photograph itself, as the description might suggest, is somewhat romantic. The image is pervaded by much the same sense as comes from flipping through old family albums, which is where it could well have come from. It defies location in an immediate time and space, allowing for an encounter with an unrestricted audience. No clues as to its deconstruction, no indicators of its history or function are given. Instead, each repetition causes a shift in focus and perception through the alteration of the light, each encounter

a shift in the trace of the memory that it triggers, while simultaneously diminishing the trace of the artist as absent subject. It calls into play our experience of the very photograph itself.

Overlay then comes to function much the same as images that Jean Baudrillard, in 'Photography, Or the Writing of Light' (1999), refers to as being capable of withstanding the force of imposed signification. The photograph, he writes, 'simultaneously ends the real presence of the object and the presence of the subject. In this act of reciprocal disappearance, we also find a transfusion between object and subject.' However, in order for this transfusion to succeed, the object 'must survive this disappearance to create a "poetic situation of transfer" or a transfer of poetic situation".' This speaks to the force of Cenek's work, which lies precisely in its ability to 'touch us directly, impose on us its peculiar illusion', allowing it to speak at once through the mire of enforced meanings and representations in a language that is intrinsically

ZARMEENÉ SHAH



Nasrin Tabatabai and Babak Afrassiabi: *Seep* Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA) 27 October - 20 January

In the context of MACBA's ongoing affair with art-as-archive, and the thematic rehang of its collection, Seep has been set up to read as 'journalistic art', a claim supported by the topicality of its subject, Iranian modernity. But as the imprisoned Iranian-born Newsweek journalist Maziar Bahari found to his cost, this is not a country tolerant of even objective critique from within. That artists Nasrin Tabatabai and Babak Afrassiabi – also known for the Farsi/English publication Pages – still work out of Tehran understandably precludes their taking any radical stance: but what kind of journalism pulls its punches?

Seep explores two distinct archives. The first, belonging to British Petroleum, includes documentation of a promotional film aborted prior to the nationalisation of Iran's oil in 1951; the second is the £2.5 billion cache of artworks acquired in the mid-1970s but banished to the basement of Tehran's purpose-built Museum of Contemporary Art following the Islamic Revolution of 1979. In finally realising the former and exposing the absence of the latter, Tabatabai and Afrassiabi stage a recontextualisation that promises insights into Iran's troubled path to modernity.

Of Seep's two central videos, one is a road movie in search of the eponymous black stuff and loosely follows in BP's footsteps, the other a more poetic musing set to a reading of the original filmmaker's conclusion that, devoid of visuality, the quest for these seeps was 'unfilmable'.

Western oil exploitation is a soft and politically loaded target. The obvious reading here is the industry's disregard for the environment, one the show's curator, Soledad Gutiérrez, eagerly encourages. Yet far from being another *Deepwater Horizon*, oil seepage is, I discover, a natural phenomenon, known and exploited for millennia. Having worked up an unjustified lather against BP, I feel duped: this is less *Newsweek* than *National Geographic*.

Among other artefacts tenuously grafted to the installation is an incomplete list of Tehran's absent holdings of Western art and a model of the museum's spaces. But although the 1,500 works are said to have been 'unseen' for 33 years, a (necessarily limited) showing of them was arranged for the Revolution's 20th anniversary, and it is possible to view at least a selection by appointment. Having done so in 2002, I can attest that the sequestration of this coffee-table panorama of blue-chip masters is no great tragedy: far more is lost to private collections. And on the plus side, the museum's vacated walls provide exhibiting opportunities for younger Iranian artists otherwise denied a voice.

Effective journalism is direct and unambiguous; art, one hopes, leaves the reading open. Irrespective of its post-Greenbergian return to content (a theme of MACBA's current rehang), art retains the potential for embracing that elusive other: the aesthetic. While Seep's journalistic punches are mostly feints that won't bloody any noses, the depiction of these oil seeps amid arid landscapes reveals an unremarked-upon beauty: marbled like endpapers or else dense, black and impenetrable. Yet the unwillingness to engage with the visual and visceral implies that 'beauty' itself is the dirty word here.

This reluctance to acknowledge the aesthetic mirrors, a tad ironically, the Islamic Republic's own censoring of 'decadent' Western art. It will be interesting to see if *Seep* reads differently in the context of London's Chisenhale Gallery this spring.

KEITH PATRICK



Neïl Beloufa: *Documents Are Flat 4* Kunstraum Innsbruck 13 November – 22 December

Where's Innsbruck? What it's like? Well, it's worth the journey. In the course of just two years Veit Loers, veteran exhibitions-maker with a taste for the darker side of power, has invited Danh Vo, Gregor Schneider and Thomas Zipp to this Alpine valley and turned the provincial Austrian state capital's 'art space' into something of a treasure. Most recently, with a show by Neïl Beloufa, his farewell celebrations proved to be an unexpected highpoint. Beloufa-twenty-seven, French, with roots in Algeria - already stood out at Okwui Enwezor's Paris Triennial. He has just turned the Palais de Tokyo's Galerie Basse into an idiosyncratic island landscape and is about to show at Kunsthaus Bregenz. His work gets under your skin in Innsbruck, too: the Kunstraum looks like a trashed holiday camp in a Michel Houellebecq novel.

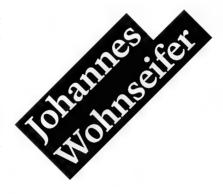
Plywood partitions, foam-rubber cushions, pallets, cables and metal rods – shabby leftovers from civilisation – are strewn around the space, creating a rhythm of their own. A few photographs of monumental architectural structures are stuck here and there: on the gallery walls, crude scrawls recall cave paintings or bunker graffiti. Bits have been hacked out of the walls and are now lying around on the floor, like deformed building blocks, fragmented echoes of Modernism. Everything is roughly daubed with whitewash. The dulled tactility of the scene might call to mind Absalon's Cellules if it were not for the story adding another dimension to this situation.

On two of the walls, playing with a time delay, is a video of a house somewhere outside Algiers. This was occupied by terrorists for three years; but oddly they left no trace of their presence, and in any case, with its big windows, veranda and tropical garden, it was hardly the ideal hideout - and so beautiful that the state militia's commanding officer (obviously a Frank Lloyd Wright fan) evidently didn't want to destroy it. Beloufa heard about it from his mother, who lives close by. He went there, from Paris, and asked the neighbours, the gardener and the owner about anything they might have seen; he recorded everything they said and later added their voices to footage shot on a set he built back in France. Figures make their way slowly and steadily through a strangely flat, warm-coloured ambience with panorama wallpaper and plywood chairs.

We never see their faces; it's a bewildering scenario, with the witness's words providing a narrative collage. Whether the terrorist story is true or not is neither here nor there. It's become a myth, and the house is just a stage where a drama is played out.

Neo-noir, science fiction and archaic visual memories - Beloufa creates a self-sufficient poetry of things unfathomable and cryptic, a deprived theatre of the absurd. As in the Palais de Tokyo, where his videos, filmed in situ, of the apocalypse of the 'hipster era' are projected directly onto sculptures, at Documents are Flat 4 visitors stumble through an existentially saturated fake. Beloufa sets traps for himself, but he doesn't fall foul of any of them. Steering clear of multicultural kitsch and political Pop, modishly abject materials and smart responses to Modernism, he permeates the space with the menacing, dark sounds of the aforementioned myth, giving the surreal game a melancholy tinge. What Nietzsche called a 'concentrated image of the world', providing spiritual refuge for rootless wanderers, becomes in Beloufa's hands an ascetic tableau vivant for the late-modernist viewer clinging precariously to the globe. Who said all the great narratives are a thing of the past? Neïl Beloufa's story is still unfolding. Translated from the German by Fiona Elliott

GESINE BORCHERDT



Johannes Wohnseifer: *Water from a Melted Ice Sculpture* Galerie Johann König, Berlin 27 October – 22 December

Ever since the early 1990s Johannes Wohnseifer (born in Cologne in 1967) has been exploring an aesthetic that combines strategies drawn from both Pop and Conceptual art. His own life and self-image as an artist generally provide the starting point for his distinctly intelligent art. And this is once again the case in *Water from a Melted Ice Sculpture*. Although this exhibition may run the risk of self-repeating elegance, it is also persuasive in its expansion of a particular artistic

approach. The series Farbtafeln (Colour Plates, 2012), for instance, reveals an involuntary tendency towards decoration, with its paint-pot lids set in monochrome aluminium panels. The colour of the panels matches that of the paint in the pots. These collages of lids in monochrome picture planes speak – if a little vaguely – of the artist's work in his studio, calling to mind pictures he has painted or is yet to paint. And although these representational abstractions confront the traditions of avant-garde art, they don't really add anything new of their own. However, as soon as Wohnseifer gives his artistic concept a (rigorous) biographical twist, his art comes to life.

Witness his Bücherbilder (Book Pictures, 2012), a group of works that derives from Wohnseifer's collection of barcode labels from catalogues and books he has bought in recent months. All these items were purchased from Buchhandlung Walther König - owned by his gallerist's uncle. Painted enlargements of these labels are then arranged in seemingly random groups. However, these combinations are anything but coincidental, for they precisely detail the artist's reading habits. We see from these black-and-white oil paintings that Wohnseifer has been looking not only at catalogues of works by contemporary painters but also at political art by younger artists. At the same time, in these paintings banal barcode labels are transformed into 'noble' art.

Knowing - thanks to his Bücherbilder - that Wohnseifer has recently been engaging with political work such as that of French artist group Claire Fontaine, it comes as no surprise that there are also explicitly political works of his own in this exhibition, most notably his ten-part series Neue Farben (New Colours, 2012). This group is painted in RAL colours that are not available on the open market and do not even feature among the official RAL colour swatches. They were specifically developed for the use of German troops deployed in Afghanistan, or to put it more precisely, they are used for camouflage purposes and have been specifically formulated to blend into the local landscape, which is why they are in fact still secret. Wohnseifer uses them in abstract paintings that sometimes seem to echo French landscape paintings from the 1950s, sometimes seem to recall cartographic illustration. Yet despite the 'ugly' history of their colours, these paintings are undeniably 'beautiful' - and it is exactly this dichotomy that makes these 'Afghanistan paintings' so remarkable. Translated from the German by Fiona Elliott

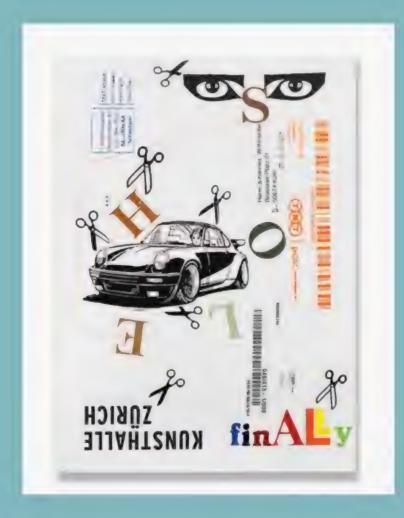
RAIMAR STANGE

Neil Beloufa

Documents Are Flat 4

(installation view), 2012. Photo:
Matthias Zifko. Courtesy the
artist and Kunstraum Innsbruck





Johannes Wohnseifer Holes XIV, 2012, acrylic on aluminium, 140 x 100 cm. Photo: Roman März. Courtesy the artist and Johann König, Berlin



Yue Minjun: The Shadow of the Crazy Laugh Fondation Cartier, Paris 14 November - 17 March

During the early 1990s, when Yue Minjun's laughing self-portraits first emerged from Yuanmingyuan - the now-defunct art colony outside Beijing where, after the collective anguish of the Tiananmen Square massacre, a more inward-looking group of artists developed what arguably could be described as the first forms of individualist artistic expression in postmodern China - the paintings seemed to stand for something that, though hard precisely to identify, resonated with a surrealistic, historically specific and refreshingly new Chinese-ness. Big, kitschily coloured and cleverly loaded with allusions drawn from Western and Eastern art history, they poleswapped edgily between the political and the cynical, the inscrutable and the transparent, the whimsical and the derisive, and the original and the banal. The canvases, each a variation of Yue and/or Yues as chortling Everymen, posed one single question: what the hell was so funny? The answers-China, art, life, communism, capitalism, cultural stereotypes, Yue Minjun, all artists, all people - multiplied and refracted like the faces of Orson Welles and Rita Hayworth in the hall of mirrors shootout scene at the end of The Lady from Shanghai (1947).

Twenty years on, Yue is among the most well-to-do Chinese artists of his or any other generation. One of the few painters worldwide with multiple seven-figure auction sales, and one of perhaps five alive with the instantly recognisable transcultural iconicity of an Andy Warhol, Gerhard Richter or Francis Bacon, he would seem to have every reason in the world to throw back his head and guffaw.

For the rest of us, however, as this show makes clear, the joke is over. Shuffling slack-jawed and round-shouldered through two floors of his laughing likenesses – the same shiny face, scrunched-up eyes and rictus grin repeated ad nauseam, here attached to a dinosaur, there flying a goose, there standing in as executioners and executed in a Tiananmen Squared Goya/Manet tableau—is a cheerless prospect, enough to make even the most chuckleheaded frown with despair. Move on, Minjun, these walls seem to moan. Find a new path.

There are encouraging signs that the painter, too, is growing tired of his cataplectic conquest of ubiquity and would like to turn the corner, or at least pull the other leg. First of these is his 'Landscape with No One' series, in which he erases figures from famous figurative paintings - Mao from socialist realist murals, for example, or Marat from David's Death of Marat (1793). Unfortunately, as strategies for generating artworks, these are, again, facile at best. More promising, in its confounding of past and present, is Anchoret in the Mountains (2008), a wall-size, mangalike depiction, in raw-stroked blacks, greys and whites, of a towering mountain peak labyrinthine with footpaths and tunnels. In shape and form, it looks something like what a teleported Song Dynasty ink-and-wash expert might sketch if hired to produce Donkey Kong backgrounds. At last year's Chengdu Biennale, Yue produced new takes on this shan shui tradition of landscape painting to great effect, using Chinese characters to build up the labyrinth's walls. One hopes that this direction will be followed further. It promises better views than the newest works in the Fondation Cartier show, small-format portraits from 2012 in which Yue wipes the smirk off his face with a frustrated, circling smudge that vaguely calls to mind midcareer Francis Bacon. Francis Bacon? Hah! Don't make me laugh.

CHRISTOPHER MOONEY



Ann Cathrin November Høibo with CEO Gallery/Jakobsen/Wrånes: It's Not the Title Because It Doesn't Make Sense Anymore Oslo Kunstforening 18 October - 18 November

Ann Cathrin November Høibo's third show in Oslo in 2012 (following key exhibitions with Standard (Oslo) and the Henie Onstad Kunstsenter) shows the artist's lighter and wittier side. Initially planned as simply another solo, it diversified. Høibo invited two guests, who collaborated with her; and a third invitee, Tiril Hasselknippe of CEO Gallery in Malmö, invited a whole range more: a strategy both fun and astute from a recent graduate at risk of overexposure.

Høibo originally trained as a textile artist, and when dealing with her materials – be they dirty wax cloths from a suburban Frankfurt market or soft piles of haute-couture fabrics – craftsmanship is a driving force for her. So is an intimate relationship with her old-school tool of choice, the loom. Finishing on time and declaring works to be finalised is relatively unimportant. Elements seem to slide around from one Høibo exhibition to the next, always altered in surprising ways, like old acquaintances you run into in new social settings, in new clothes, with a different dog, the wrong girlfriend.

A Greek-ish plaster statue of a decapitated male - a classical cast, save the tennis socks, and draped in a woven piece - greets visitors. In 2011 Høibo helped elevate Hannah Ryggen, who died in 1970, to new visibility by co-organising a show of her work in Oslo, just before the tapestries she had adored for a decade were prominently presented in this year's Documenta. In a similar gesture of homage, for this show Høibo worked with her former weaving teacher, the eighty-fiveyear-old artist Else Marie Jakobsen, on this work, Offentlig Utsmykking (2012). A third collaborator on it was ingenious performance artist Tori Wrånes, most often seen hanging from some ceiling or other or singing with her hair on fire. Wrånes's recent experience of having a

commissioned work inexcusably censored (unexpectedly misinterpreted by certain audience members as related to 2011's terrorist attacks on Oslo) helped motivate the wry plaster piece, whose dry title translates precisely as *Public Commission*. Though facing us and with his woven 'coat' wide open, *Offentlig Utsmykking*'s naked figure is hardly a flasher. Rather, he suggests the metaphoric exposure involved when artists lay themselves bare by presenting new, perhaps tentative work to an appraising public. In other métiers, people practice before performing; when artists (like critics) rehearse and mature year by year, both hits and misses are there for all to see and judge.

Distributed through the space, meanwhile, Høibo's series of small loomlike frames (which share the show's title) hilariously thematise the will to tolerate the inevitable failures of any learning process and move on: the yarn of one loom starts sagging, one imagines, and the artist discards it, swiftly moving on to a new one. Which, too, goes contorted or knotted. On to the next, and the next; finally, exhibit all the stages. A white corner-evocative, perhaps, of hospitals or mental institutions - awaits in the second room and offers another successful articulation of the will to fail. Couches Horisontal #2 (Y) (2012), by the aforementioned Hasselknippe, is a sofalike structure in white fake leather. But like a rodeo bull, its angrily skewed angles would have you slide off. As if the psychoanalyst's couch were to rise up and climb the walls with anger and frustration, the furniture has broken loose of its shape and gone strange. The second in a planned series of couches that the artist avowedly intends to be 'loving', this one makes clear that it still has some distance to go.

JOHANNE NORDBY WERNØ

Yue Minjun Memory-2, 2000, oil on canvas. © the artist





Ann Cathrin November Høibo, Else-Marie Jakobsen, Tori Wrånes Offentlig Utsmykking, 2012, sculpture with tapestry, 195 x 100s x 70 cm. Photo: Vegard Kleven



Stanley Brouwn Konrad Fischer Galerie, Berlin 2 November - 12 January

Last summer, an exhibition of Stanley Brouwn's work at the Institut d'Art Contemporain, Villeurbanne, was cancelled - 'on his decision', according to an e-flux announcement. Artists don't usually rescind their own shows, but the seventy-eight-year-old Suriname-born, Netherlands-based Brouwn, a guarded autodidact who'd find even that brief biography excessive, is famously idiosyncratic. The reason this review is not illustrated, for example, is because Brouwn, way ahead of Tino Sehgal, forbids reproductions of his work: not that they'd reproduce well anyway. His scanty, avuncular practice, a clean fusion of Fluxus-style absurdism, Minimalism and Conceptualism, is predicated on the notion that modern modes of travel such as flight have undermined our sense of space, distance and location. Against that, Brouwn has offered art as rapt dimensioning of physical space. In 1970, he began making shows by removing existing artworks from institutions and installing, in their place, a single note that read, in part, 'In this space, as in every building on earth, it is also "raining cosmic rays".' For a 2001 show in Ghent, he exhibited only cards recording the rooms' proportions.

By those austere standards, then, Brouwn's newest show is superabundant, featuring as it does a handful of framed drawings, some wall texts and several things on the floor. One of these is a cube of wood, accompanied by this wall caption: 'a wooden cube: 1 x 1 x 1 foot / (old measure of length from heidelberg) / at a distance of 1 m from a wall 4.541 x 4.267 m / in the konrad fischer galerie berlin/from 2-11-12 until 12-1-13'. The 'old measure of length' is apropos, since Brouwn apparently also invented his own units of measure some time ago, maybe feeling that the old ones were arbitrary or maybe because he's bloody-minded. '1 pikhalebi = 68.6 cm', reads one text accompanying a framed square sheet of paper, proportioned accordingly. On the floor are two lengths of black tape, each labelled with a cardinal point and presumably positioned using a compass: north and south, east and west. Wall texts nearby note that, at this moment, X number of people are travelling north (or south, east or west) on Berlin's Alexanderplatz - which, at least during daytime hours, is likely to be always

correct. The city is instantly repositioned as vectored, and Brouwn, amusingly, gets to be right and imprecise at once.

Critics have previously suggested that he resembles some kind of demented, obsessive bureaucrat, determinedly fulfilling crazy tasks. Yet it's worth noting that the comparably elusive American artist David Hammons is an admirer of Brouwn, and I would imagine that what Hammons appreciates is the elder artist's ability to play sociable havoc with the unwritten rules of the art game, to withhold all but the most meagre gifts in a way that focuses attention on what remains, and to the point of quiet delirium. Brouwn's measurements don't feel sufficient, because they're idiosyncratically his, but they jeopardise consensual measure to a point where that doesn't satisfy either. One is left seeing one's own bodily motion as a subjective measure of space - space, lest we forget, swirling magically with invisible protons and electrons and other cosmic rays - and the unlikely awareness that dissatisfaction has its satisfactions too.

MARTIN HERBERT



Curtis Mann (main gallery) / Valerio Carrubba (project room) Galleria Monica De Cardenas, Milan 26 September - 24 November

The ouroboros, the circular serpent biting its own tail, is such an ancient symbol that Jung indexed it as an archetype. Since snakes cyclically renew their skin, the *ouroboros* stands for eternal return, transformation, self-reflectivity – a perfect icon, I guess, for the infinite cycle of production, consumption and reproduction of digital images, endlessly feeding itself, to which we are currently overexposed. Curtis Mann aptly gave the titles *Ouroboros, Light* and *Ouroboros, Dark* to new large works created for this show (all 2012), which extends his enquiry into the structure of

photography. In 2010 the Chicago-based Mann participated in the Whitney Biennial with After the Dust, Second View (Beirut) (2009), a series of chemically altered prints based on images of conflict and strife randomly found on websites like Flickr, which he had partially erased and blurred, as if in a 2.0 version of Pictorialism. In Milan he moves even closer to painterly effects by manipulating a set of lensless pictures of his own making, in order to create abstract compositions on the edge between, as his show's title suggests, Medium and Materiality.

Mann bridges the gap between digital and material worlds by physically performing on his prints several actions carried out by photo-editing softwares: cut, paste, dissolve, glow, bulge, dent, twirl... so that the manipulation of each image becomes tangible. As if to reverse the speed of digital postproduction, his process is long and elaborate: he covers some areas of the original prints in transparent varnish, before exposing them to acids and bleaching. He then rips and fractures them in pixellike squares, which he finally recomposes in abstract grids where white fragments are interspersed among 'figurative' ones, sometimes torn and tossed, their backs exposed. In other works - Openings, Concrete; You Are the Measure (Desktop) - Mann presents to the viewers only the neutral verso of a print, but with tiny portions of paper flipped up, as if to suggest possible readings, while in the smaller series Paper Fragments, he assembles small bits of altered chromogenic prints into 'alien' and almost sculptural forms, collaged on some black-andwhite laser prints, used as undisclosed backgrounds.

In the project room, the reflection upon found images, self-imposed 'anachronism' and analytic techniques takes another turn with Italian artist Valerio Carrubba's oil paintings. Adopting the classical format of half-length portraits set against a monochromatic background, these four works depict imaginary characters, clad in kimonos, wearing garish designer clothes or fully covered in tattoos, but with faces enigmatically concealed by masses of intricately combed hair. Typically for Carrubba, all the titles are palindromes: Ian is not on Sinai (all works 2012); Olson is in Oslo; Kc is sick, Mr Alarm. The paintings (after preexisting images) are binary also in terms of execution: since 2003, Carrubba has been painting each of his subjects twice. After having entirely finished a figure, he both erases and replicates it by painting an exact replica on top: a nonmechanical method of reproduction that defuses all the image's 'realism' to highlight instead the devious process of its formulation. The obsessive details, saturated colours and neat outlines of the portraits, as well as the repetitive perfection of each brushstroke, seduce the gaze and make it wander over every inch of the surface, only to remind us that there's no original below the copy we look at.

BARBARA CASAVECCHIA



Valerio Carrubba Mr Alarm, 2012, oil on stainless steel, 53 x 44 cm. Photo: Andrea Rossetti. Courtesy Galleria Monica De Cardenas, Milan



Inti (see White Wall) Pagano, 2012, Hamra, Beirut. Courtesy Beirut Art Center



White Wall
Beirut Art Center
6 September - 3 November

Beirut, a palimpsest as much as a city on account of the sustained ruination and reconstruction it has endured over the years, is apparently virgin territory when it comes to home-grown graffiti. This is according to the organisers of White Wall, an exhibition of international graffiti works at the Beirut Art Center, itself situated in an industrial and increasingly tagged area of the city. Where the city's walls tended to be garlanded with political slogans and images of martyrs during the Civil War years, Western-style graffiti began appearing intermittently from the mid-1990s, with more local forms only appearing as recently as 2005. One of the show's organisers, Lebanese artist Siska, was responsible, together with the artist Prime, for the graffito 'Beirut never dies', written in Arabic in the city during the Israeli bombings in 2006 and marking something of a shift for the nascent graffiti scene. It's a shame, then, that much of the work on show is by artists



Chen Weicai (see See/Saw) Dots, 2012. Photo: Peter Le. Courtesy UCCA, Beijing from elsewhere. An impressive mural by Egyptian Ammar Abo Bakr (one of the artists behind the revolutionary murals on Mohammed Mahmoud Street in Cairo, frequently photographed by Western media), beautiful graphic works incorporating Arabesque design and calligraphy by Belgian artist Parole and French artist Zepha, and eerily lifelike figures variously barfing, or spraying 'This is/ is not art' (depending on your vantage point in the gallery stairwell) by American Mark Jenkins show a willingness to engage and welcome different forms of street art from around the world. While it has become a somewhat tired theme for gallery shows in the West, White Wall shows how innervating graffiti can be when removed to a different context - something that however brings with it certain colonising connotations. This is underlined in a video by German collective Graffitimuseum, whose subject is a Berlin graffer of Lebanese origin eager to put his stamp on the city. Used to working in the Berlin neighbourhood of Kreuzberg, he was amazed upon arriving in Beirut in 2005 to discover a 'virgin city' in which he could quickly become 'king'. It says a lot about the ego of the artist but also about the city itself, which the organisers of the show argue is as much a blank canvas for graffiti as the normally white walls of the space. Indeed, the show extends beyond the works displayed to take in specially commissioned graffiti across the city - no mean feat, given the often bitterly contested nature of public space there. An enormous mural by Chilean artist Inti decorates the side of a building next to a demolition site, while a large-scale collaborative calligraphic work by local Lebanese artists and Zepha can be seen beneath the roaring Charles Helou Bridge. But it is in the gallery itself that one encounters Belgian artist Obetre's 'graffitectures': wooden sculptures on the walls that have been burned and placed next to their former traces, suggestive of the violence that can both spur and accompany graffiti, but also the need to leave a trace, however ephemeral, in the urban hotchpotch. Though nonsectarian, and largely gallery-based, the works in White Wall nevertheless speak of the politics of public space: of access to it, how it can be decorated, but also what it can be used to articulate.

LAURA ALLSOP



See/Saw: Collective Practice in China Now Ullens Center for Contemporary Art (UCCA), Beijing 30 November - 30 December

Over a period of six weeks earlier this winter, the Long Gallery at UCCA hosted a series of renegade exhibitions by artist collectives; 14 such groups showcased their work, two or three per week, in quick-fire rotation. See/Saw examines 'the production processes and decisions involved in creative collaborations' and 'the notions of codependence and reaction'; the audience, in turn, is urged to notice how the exhibitions vie or interact with each other. These are tall orders, where in the first instance it is unusual even to see the work of collectives – unrefined and performative as it tends to be – displayed and deconstructed in an institutional context.

Double Fly Art Center, one of the more prominent of the collectives featured, colonised one of the rooms during the first week. Their rampant, monstrous and satirical carnival of strange beasts and figures covered the walls in heavy layers, with the staging extending to a projection, a large black booth and fake red candles on ornate gold stands. The artists themselves were present in helmets, boiler suits and other conspicuous garb. In the other room, A Diaodui's outing was sedate and introverted by comparison. The collective enacted a discursive piece, with members congregating around a table to talk about their lives and create secretive performances that remain barely seen.

Week two belonged to three groups: Museum of Unknown, ZUZHI and the North Village Independent Workshop. Here the combination of assembled objects, installations and video placed unobtrusively around the rooms made the presence of different collectives less evident. Slightly whimsical works by individual members of the North Village Independent Workshop, like Chen Xianhui's Trash's Words (2012), a selection of old objects - dirty workers' gloves, broken-up violins, rolls of electrical flex, photographs and pages - affixed to the wall, and Chen Weicai's Dots (2012) - a circular formation of yellow blots - conjured a thoughtful atmosphere. More formal contemplation came from Through (2010), also by Chen Weicai - a twisted bamboo sculpture made from synthetic material, and white frames containing grids of coloured squares and rectangles (Dong Dawei's Metamorphosis, 2011). Text printed in Chinese and English on the wall by the theory-driven Museum of Unknown asks, 'What do we talk about when we talk about art?' Comparatively overlooked during that week was ZUZHI's video Sun, a performance work in which children acted out - in makeshift costume - important works from Western art history, or recounted Warhol's '15 minutes of fame' statement in silver wigs.

The third exhibition in the series featured two videos by 8mg and Irrelevant Commission that shared an interest in intervention into daily life. Irrelevant Commission placed uncharacteristic objects in a supermarket for people to find (*Let's Do - Everything Is the Same*, 2012), while the protagonists of 8mg's *Bricks* (2012) carried a brick with them throughout an ordinary day – an activity professed as political in the context of their practice, though its specific condition as such remained unclear to the uninformed viewer.

There can be no doubt of the increasing activity of artist collectives in China, nor of a developing interest in performance-based practice. Though the See/Saw shortlist was by no means exhaustive (a number of collectives that one might have expected to see, such as WAZA, were not present, whereas Guest has already cropped up a number of times this year in the commercial realm), the series was a useful window onto some of their work. The element of chance as to whether each week's instalment would be good or bad, affecting or obscure, was refreshing, and as curator Paula Tsai was quick to point out, the formal operations of an institution like UCCA are not geared to featuring such sporadic and freewheeling exhibitions. Whether this series lived up to its promise to examine how these interventions played off one another, or interacted (or not) in any given week, is rather in doubt. This is a mode of working seldom seen in an institutional context in China (or indeed elsewhere), so one might wonder what the point was of expecting them to engage with each other. Nevertheless See/Saw represented a worthy 'democratisation' of an institutional space, offering valuable experimental edge and uncommon encounters with collective practices - ample concerns, one might argue, for the moment.

IONA WHITTAKER



30th Bienal de São Paulo: The Imminence of Poetics Parque do Ibirapuera, São Paulo 7 September – 9 December

Sixty years ago, at the first Bienal de São Paulo – then organised along national lines like Venice, the only recurring international exhibition that's been around longer – Max Bill, the Swiss artist, was awarded the first prize in sculpture. Like the event itself, the selection signalled São Paulo's wealth and international cultural engagement; but it also came at the start of a decade during which Brazilian artists and critics urgently debated what political role abstraction – like Bill's – might play in their rapidly developing nation, and perhaps more cogently, how art might result from and influence the coincidence of the individual and the social.

The 30th iteration of the Bienal attempts to interrogate both the form and content of the sprawling survey exhibition in similar ways. It is conceived less as an overview of recent trends than a philosophical exploration of the way art works. At its core are the ideas of *poiesis*: the Greek root of poetry, which means actualisation or becoming; and imminence, the sense that this actualisation takes place whenever a viewer engages with an artwork. The exhibition is laid out in nine clusters, each the subject of a podcast by Luis Pérez-Oramas, the show's chief curator, that lead the viewer through an explication of the process.

Crudely summarised, the stages start with material, the stuff things are made of, and move through representation, labour, subjectivity, recontextualisation, the categorisation of knowledge, the individual vs. others, architecture and finally, society. The show begins with, among other examples, the weavings of Sheila Hicks, which foreground the colour and texture of substances as diverse as feathers and rope, and ends with August Sander's epic photographic series, *People of the Twentieth Century*. Exhibited in its entirety, it forms a portrait of the body politic in Weimar Germany.

Everything in the show, however, can be related to many, if not all, of the nine stages. In revealing the architecture of society, Sander for instance draws on the categorisation of knowledge (the class system) as well as representation (in the form of the photograph) and the concept of the individual. In its way, his series is also a weaving; a connection that loops back to Hicks's work. Displayed here with the notebooks she kept on research trips to places such as Peru, Mexico and Japan, Hicks's own pieces are also about labour and how traditions are updated and abstracted in works of art.

Once the viewer starts making such connections, associations ping back and forth across the exhibition. This associative process – all the categories working together – is *poiesis*, the thing that effects poetry. It turns the exhibitiongoer from a consumer of content laid out by a curator into a participant who creates meaning for him or herself, and I suspect it is meant to make the entire Bienal a mechanism of interactive communication.

Concurrently, Pérez-Oramas sketches a history of socially and viewer-engaged work. Hanging near Sander's magnum opus is a selection of homoerotic photographs of young men by the Brazilian engineer and artist Alair Gomes (some taken in his studio, some with a telephoto lens out his window), and across from them, Mark Morrisroe's elegiac photographs of friends shot during the 1980s in New York's East Village. The pairing suggests that communities are imagined or created, Morrisroe's around shared sexual identity and experience; Gomes's around his idealisation of classically handsome young men and their knowing projection of a charged masculinity. Similarly Jiří Kovanda's actions, like laying sugar around a street corner, documented in black-and-white photographs, were meant to draw attention to the individual and, as acts of personal communication, intended to disrupt the conformist social veneer in Communist Czechoslovakia.

Art like this raises ethical questions about who is speaking to whom and why. The selection of work in the Bienal suggests an answer that demands that art act as an agent of individual and community empowerment. But the question of communication must also be applied to the exhibition itself. This is a self-imposed test, and the show fails it. Most of the work here is either

discursive - Alejandro Cesarco's analyses of how texts function, to give but one example - or depends on the combination of disparate objects in supposedly provocative ways, a practice that has become an overused artistic lingua franca. According to the many - overly obtuse - wall texts, both approaches reveal the 'poetic'; however, this oft-used word is never defined. Whatever the curators meant by it - I arrived at my own definition by force of will - might be revealed in the catalogue essays. But these are rife with multiple references to twentieth-century European theorists and recent curatorial conversations about, for instance, whether biennials can function as early warning systems for social change. If there is a poetics involved here, it is one of the academic mind, not the artistic experience of the large audience.

JOSHUA MACK

Alair Gomes (see 30th Bienal de São Paulo) Sonatinas, Four Feet nr. 21 (detail), c. 1977, silver gelatine paper print, 12 x 18 cm. Courtesy Coleção Joaquim Paiva





Sheila Hicks (see 30th Bienal de São Paulo) Ptera II, 2011, cotton, silk, feathers, 29 × 15 cm. © 2011 Sheila Hicks. Courtesy Sikkema Jenkins & Co, New York

Books

THEORY

Fear and Art in the Contemporary World

By Caterina Albano Reaktion Books, £20 (softcover)

How did fear become the zeitgeist? This is the question that drives Caterina Albano's tour of the more anxious ends of the emotional spectrum. It actually brought to mind an earlier time – of SARS and WMDs, of ambiguous threats and shady statecraft – and consequently Albano's talk of a 'culture of fear' seemed, at least to me, a little '2003'. But I was wrong: as current 'voice of a generation' Lena Dunham admits at the climax of her HBO series Girls (2012), "I'm scared all the time... I'm more scared than most people are when they say they're scared. I'm, like, the most scared person who's alive" – to which her boyfriend replies, "Join the fucking club!"

Even so, it's been a very long zeit. In his Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis (1920) Freud describes how, from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, the number of reported phobias exploded, encompassing everything from caterpillars and mice to boats and bridges. The doctor distinguished several shades of fear, including the 'real fear' linked to palpable threats and self-preservation, as well as phobias and plain 'ordinary nervousness'. But above all else, it was anxiety - what Freud called 'free floating fear' that would become the quintessentially modern feeling. What distinguishes anxiety is that it lacks an object: the phobic person is, at least, scared of something, whereas the anxious person is iust scared.

Albano is a researcher and curator for the UK-based Artakt, a group that produces crossover science/art exhibitions, most recently on psychoanalysis (at London's Science Museum, 2010–11) and on art and biotechnologies (at London's Royal Institution, 2009). Fear and Art... reflects this collision of disciplines, quoting from medical history, sociology, film theory and experimental psychology. This approach is very

appealing, if not always helpful: the medical histories are particularly fascinating, the neuroscience less so (why does brain research only ever seem to confirm 'common sense'?).

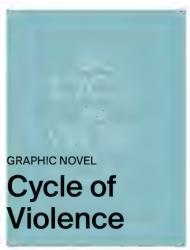
FEAR AND ART II

Albano's other concern is the aesthetics of fear, and the book might be best understood as a series of case studies through which such an aesthetics might suggest itself. It is divided into four sections, 'Bodies', 'Narratives', 'Objects' and 'Spaces', and each theme is drawn out via a series of artworks. The selection is wide-ranging, but UK artists such as Rachel Whiteread, Douglas Gordon, Cornelia Parker and Willie Doherty are some of the book's recurring characters. The author's enthusiasm for all things fearful sometimes feels limited by a need to talk about contemporary artists (I kept hoping 'less art, more fear!') At other times, the art is curiously absent. In chapter two a quote from Mike Kelley suddenly appears, tells us something about the uncanny and vanishes. The chapter drifts elsewhere, and Kelley and his work remain undiscussed.

Albano states at the outset that she is more interested in capturing 'points of contact' than drawing a comprehensive picture. The breadth of reference establishes plenty of these, but this

expansiveness also means the book suffers from a certain fogginess. This is not helped by a style that sometimes slips into the weird antiwriting of academia, overprecise to the point of vagueness (a sentence at random: 'Beyond the critical and historical debates over the formalisation of the concept of the Holocaust and its memorialisation, the cultural processes in which it is embedded are framed within the constitution of affective narratives that visually or otherwise are confronted with the emotional charge of the events.') If today's fear is free-floating, Fear and Art... matches its subject pretty well. Albano offers an intriguing compilation of research, but like big claims about epochs and zeitgeists, the precise contours of our anxious age are yet to be pinned down.

DAVID MORRIS



By Grayson Perry Atlas Press, £16.50/\$30 (hardcover)

First published in a limited edition by the Atlas Press in 1992, Cycle of Violence is, in the words of its author (writing the foreword to the current edition), 'a striking encounter with my younger, angrier self'. In Cycle..., that past self invites us into a future world based on caring, sharing and the righteousness of green causes, led by gay presidents, peppered with 1980s nostalgia pubs ('you can almost smell the cigarette smoke') and looked after by policemen who are... ha, ha, ha... 'thoroughly trained in sensitivity towards members of our community who are psychosexually disturbed'. Which is what our 'hero', a champion cyclist called Bradley (this a long time before the emergence of UK cycling hero Wiggins), is. Fusing a slightly clunky J.G. Ballard with a more raw and brutal Aubrey Beardsley, Perry's intricately scratchy black-andwhite drawings take us through a slew of more-or-less kinky sexual murders as impotence (as a cyclist and a man) and Bradley's attendant psychological problems overtake him, before guiding us through the roots of his trauma and, from there, with a certain naive optimism, onto our homicidal cyclist's eventual salvation. While Perry rather forcefully suggests that his graphic novella might provide a simplistic insight into himself (Bradley is a man driven by mother issues, gender confusion and a passion for Japanese ceramics; and in case you remain unconvinced, Perry points out that when he went into therapy six years after creating Cycle..., he immediately presented his therapist with a copy) what makes it worth reading is that it stands apart from its creator as a reflection (albeit a warped one) of the shared psychology of its time. Unless, of course, your heart's desire really is to get to know Perry as well as he apparently knows himself...

MARK RAPPOLT

CONFESSION

Failure, A Writer's Life

By Joe Milutis

Zero Books, £14.99/\$24.95 (softcover)

Halfway through Failure, A Writer's Life, Joe Milutis clarifies why his book is such a challenging if sometimes exhilarating read. His unstructured philosophic/critical patchwork, he says, is a 'sincere attempt at creative failure'; in an afterword, he'll call it 'literary hari-kari... a book that strained against its bookness'. The author, a media artist, is trying to write something that, in failing, is apposite to its subject, a self-assembled canon of literary and sometimes nonliterary endeavours - from André Breton's automatism to the constraint-driven experiments of Oulipo, from the Fortean Times to teenager-dominated 'dump' websites for spliced .gif files - which are inadequate as literature or art, but which Milutis doggedly interprets as successful in another way.

That is, they illuminate what he calls 'the virtual' and what Gilles Deleuze, the book's intellectual polestar, called 'the whole, spirit, thought, potential, the open...', etc. What this means, one knows instinctively - the whole sprawl of life, within which the glowing wilds of the Internet, while analogous to it, are merely contained. Cultural production, meanwhile, can't bottle this expanse but can point to it, and the works that Milutis considers as 'failing' by consensual standards seem to him to do so. When his book excites intellectually, it's in lateral linkages that show this approach at work across time. Charles Fort of the Fortean Times, for example, racked up iterations of weird phenomena but never explained them, producing unreadable books that add up to a 'hulking monotone of the fantastic. I could only get through about half', writes Milutis admiringly, 'without coming to the conclusion that to finish would be a monumental waste of time.'

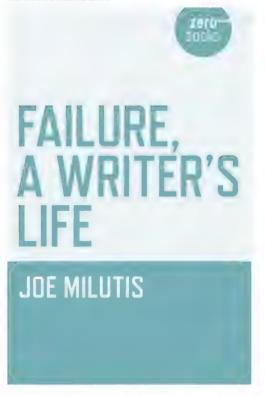
At times, Failure inspires the same thought. Milutis has plenty of erudition, sometimes to the point of showiness. He can find his subject in Citizen Kane (1941) (in the way its multiple viewpoints point to the final unknowability of a single life), in Richard Owen Cambridge's obscure 1751 epic of English doggerel, The Scribleriad, in H.P. Lovecraft's indescribable figure of horror, Cthulu, and in a 104-page FBI report on the coded writings of the biodefense expert suspected of the 2001 anthrax attacks. But the book's murky structure – ostensibly divided into past, present and future, yet ending with Roland Barthes and Walter Benjamin – makes the book feel like it is

only accruing weight via accumulation.

Seemingly Milutis wants to be an archivist of an obscure lineage and, consequently, an inspirer, outlining a style of cultural production appropriate to our digital condition, even if the digital is only illustrative of the larger, Deleuzian morass. The Web, or more generally the media, is today's premier ocean of crap to be sifted and transformed, just as the brain, for the automatist surrealists, was that of yesteryear. The modern result is 'uncreative writing' like Kenneth Goldsmith's Day (2003), 'his 836 page transcription of an entire day's New York Times'. Another example is 'Flarf' poetry, found text from the Web broken into poetic lines; one poem, repurposing lines about eating, leads Milutis to the priceless comment: 'The most telling foodscenario-fragment, "Who poo'ed vindaloo?" returns us to the more primal transcoding that happens at the toilet.'

In terms of visual art, Milutis unsurprisingly admires Ryan Trecartin, probably the artist most adeptly reflecting the chaotic, identity-bending spoor of online life now. But the American artist is most likely too embedded for his taste in a professional artworld of which the author seems deeply suspicious; also maybe too tidily successful, since for Milutis an apt response to the swamping 'virtual' might involve selfconscious sabotage. So I spent much of this book waiting for him to mention Joe Gould, hero of (in turn, a hero of mine) Joseph Mitchell's 1965 nonfiction book Joe Gould's Secret, about an intellectual hobo who claims to have written a colossal oral history of the world. Gould's magnum opus, so Milutus approvingly recounts on the last page, turns out not to exist and thereby represents a failure of formidable dimensions. Artists and writers of the future, are you inspired?

MARTIN HERBERT





Medieval Modern: Art out of Time

By Alexander Nagel Thames & Hudson, £29.95/\$45 (hardcover)

Alexander Nagel wants to enrich our understanding of modernist art and culture by rereading it through earlier artisanal practices of the feudal era (and vice versa). It is a banality to state that any age is Janus-faced; that its culture will to some extent be determined by inherited traditions and in turn will exert influence over what follows. Therefore it is hardly surprising that Nagel is able to point to medieval practices that on some levels correlate to rhetoric that surrounds twentieth-century art production, including: site-specificity, serial production, collage and the readymade. While Modernism is conventionally viewed as a break with the past, Nagel hopes to convince us that abandoning this perspective is more productive.

With his strictures against art history's established ways of organising knowledge, Nagel might be mistaken for a man who wants to overthrow every received category of the discipline. On page 56 he writes: 'The new discipline of art history, founded on neoclassical premises, was quick to forget the messy prehistory to its own historical logic. Linear chronology and style history blasted away at the temporal confusions in which earlier installations had lived and thrived'. But for all his bombast against style and periodisation, Nagel manages to retain perhaps the very worst product of conventional art history - its canon. Thus, to mention just a few of those covered, we get Duchamp, Picasso, Schwitters and Smithson.

When I read the passage cited above I thought of Enrico Baj and Sergio Dangelo's Nuclear Art Movement with its 1952 First Manifesto that opposed style in art: 'The Nuclearists desire to demolish all the 'isms' of a painting that inevitably lapses into academicism'. Nagel, of course, doesn't mention this tract or these artists, who in terms of the canon are relatively minor figures.

On page 15 Nagel writes: 'Hugo Ball, performing at the Cabaret Voltaire in 1916, found his rhythmic Dada chant taken over, as he put it, by the "ancient cadence of priestly lamentation, that style of liturgical singing that wails in all the Catholic churches of East and West". What Nagel, and most conventional art histories, don't



In the introductory essays and interviews to this directory of New York's historic artist-run 'alternative' spaces, the midtwentieth-century artworld comes across as a different planet. While the politically active practice and presentation of art today is the exception to the rule, to judge from the quotes and manifestos that pepper the plethora of material here the authors of which include artists Papo Colo (who cofounded Exit Art), Jacki Apple (who was behind a number of grassroots spaces in the 1970s) and composer Rhys Chatham - it was central to the creation of a scene that was not only largely anticommercial and anti-institutional, but also engaged in a wider social and political activism. While the book, a catalogue that expands on the themes laid out in a 2010 exhibition at Exit Art, profiles 140 artist-run spaces whose active years range from 1928 (the Sculpture Center, formed in artist Dorothea Denslow's studio) to 2010 (Our Goods, 'an online bartering network that supports artists'), its main portrait is of 1960s and 70s frustration and idealism. The convergence of a general mistrust of government in the wake of Watergate and the first sale of a contemporary artwork for more than \$100,000 (at the 1973 auction of the Scull collection) saw artists seeking alternative modes of presenting and experimenting with the process of art's presentation outside the museum

ART HISTORY

or the commercial gallery. The latter had 'the goal of self-perpetuation, not experimentation', writes onetime Exit Art curator Melissa Rachleff. The reaction against the commercial model included the formation of 112 Workshop (precursor to White Columns), the Kitchen, Artists Space and Creative Time. A number of spaces redressing the neglect by the art establishment of particular sectors of society sprung up too. A.I.R. was a cooperative gallery formed by a group of women artists; Taller Boricua promoted a Puerto Rican voice in art; and Nyumba ya Sanaa gallery was aligned with the Black Power movement. The artists behind these ventures invariably sought to integrate the process of their art's production into the local community, forerunning the educational remit of all publicly funded spaces now. It's in an engrossing read, occasionally overly nostalgic, sometimes rightfully pessimistic about the current careerist trends in self-initiated artist and curatorial projects.

OLIVER BASCIANO

mention is where this led. Ball abandoned Dada in favour of Catholic mysticism. In his *Critique* of the German Intelligentsia (1919), Ball blamed the First World War on German godlessness and claimed capitalism was a Judeo-protestant conspiracy.

That said, Ball's anti-Semitism and embrace of medievalism was mild in comparison to the political trajectory of leading Italian dadaist Julius Evola. A notorious figure even within fascist circles, Evola championed primordial tradition, and in 1937 claimed that it didn't matter if the anti-Semitic tract *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (1903) was a forgery because the text was metaphysically true. Nagel doesn't mention Evola, although other fascist modernists, such as Ezra Pound, do pop up in his text (albeit without any mention of their racist ideology).

I suspect Nagel doesn't share my view that a good proportion of his *Medieval Modern* is coextensive with *Fascist Modernism* (the title of a 1993 book by Andrew Hewitt). Ultimately Nagel's 'reframing of art history' tends to obscure more than it elucidates, including the fact that his agenda is politically and aesthetically conservative. On page 27 he writes that 'the contemporary art world... is still dominated by Western art publications. All the institutions are bound up with a primarily Western history. I am proposing that history is stranger, configured in a different way than the modernist and postmodernist histories have made visible'.

For me there is little that is strange and much that is troublesome about the stress that Nagel lays on Christian Europe (even if he claims this is a Europe that did not see itself as the centre of the world). The danger with Nagel's writing is the ease with which it could be adapted to fit contemporary far-right Islamophobic 'clash of civilisations' ideology. But even judged simply as art history it remains unconvincing.

STEWART HOME



Tim Etchells

VACUUM DAYS

ARTIST BOOK

Vacuum Days

By Tim Etchells Storythings, £19 (hardcover)

Every day throughout 2011, artist Tim Etchells (who is also artistic director of the UK's Forced Entertainment theatre company, based in Sheffield) posted an announcement, formatted to look like a circus bill, on his Vacuum Days website that served up the day's news stories as absurd vaudeville events for mass consumption. Collected here, they make a warped, satirical history of the year. 'Talented Mimes Demonstrate the 1000 Sad Faces of Nick Clegg' proclaims the poster for 9 May, for example; 'FIFA Auction. World Cup Location to the Highest Bidder. Cash Only' is how Etchells notes a football corruption scandal. Others include: 'Summer Riot Season Kicks Off in London. Everything Must Go. Bring Your Own Petrol'; 'The Inane & Shameful Wiretapped Boasting of Silvio Berlusconi Set to a Disco Soundtrack'; and 'The Fluctuating Share Price of News International Depicted in a Wild Dance by Sultry and/or Toothless "Romanian Roma Girls". Despite the humour, the tone is grim, with Etchells presenting each new outrage or disaster as a further slide into inevitable social degradation. Rather than necessarily being an advertisement for the author's own views, this dystopian outlook rather mirrors, and darkly mocks, the habitual, hypocritical howling of the modern media.

OLIVER BASCIANO

Subject: off the record

Date: Tuesday, January 1, 2013 02:19
From: gallerygirl@artreview.com
To: <office@artreview.com>
Conversation: off the record

Suddenly I am all alone. My friends are either asleep, lulled by the Suffolk air and the bottles of 1994 Quinta do Noval Nacional we've steadily been working on these past hours. Or they're upstairs, enjoying the bevy of hookers left over from September's Viennafair that I've flown in especially for these 72-hour New Year bacchanals.

This witching hour is what I've been waiting for. I throw off my Rick Owens veil-front wool-and-angora-blend hat, a device that, along with my Stella McCartney Jodie wool-twill tuxedo jumpsuit, has allowed me to maintain my disguise as Marina Abramović for these past few hours. I whip out the slate Ouija board I've stashed under the table and we're off: *ArtReview*'s predictions for 2013 are finally under way.

The editor has forgotten to put any accompanying instructions with the board. I rub it a couple of times, but nothing happens. I chop out a quick line and deliberately angle it over the first few numbers. Again, nothing. I roll the dice and yell: "Hear the drummer get wicked!" Not a peep of a hallucination. I'm getting worried. Belgian Phil is known as a quick finisher; he'll be done with the Austrians in a jiffy. Finally, I pop a couple of etizolam and ditch the Abramović getup for my trusty Mark Rothko-style chemise. To hedge my bets, I smear exposed areas of my body with lard and start chanting the lyrics of One Direction's *Live While We're Young*.

This works. Suddenly the room is filled with apparitions of artworld figures great and gone who want to provide *ArtReview*'s definitive predictions for 2013. Guillaume Apollinaire floats by yelling, "Gioni! Gioni!" before flying out the window. A lanky-haired figure shoots out the chimney: "I am the ghost of Kazimir Malevich. Last year was all about old art. Next year will all be about slightly middle-aged art. Eric Fischl will roll." Louise Bourgeois appears in a piece of wall damp, nodding vigorously in agreement, before opining: "Sarah Lucas is my spiritual daughter. Hear me now!"

Johannes Itten strides into the room and sets down his papers neatly. "A new section at a major fair will be launched," he intones in hushed tones. "Entitled 'Flippers', it will feature Urs Fischer on every wall." Clem Greenberg interjects: "I see Frieze taking over another island with minimal transport links. I foretell Tasmania!"

Alfred H. Barr floats in through a hole where a wall once was. "Post-hurricane, New York's artworld will turn into a caring, sharing place where Matthew Higgs turns up and does impromptu DIY in your gallery basement instead of DJ-ing." Everyone smiles at this happy thought. The harmonious vision is ruptured by a self-flagellating Frenchman who starts to do repellent things to Barr's ass. I recognise the genius that is Georges Bataille, as he pronounces that "London will become the plaything of the filthy rich. Cork Street is over. Shoreditch is over. Fitzrovia makes me feel dirrrty like an Eddie Peake installation."

Bataille has a tremendous orgasm, coming like a horse before fading into thin air. It's unsettling stuff, and appropriate when Jacques Lacan pipes up: "Following the success of Hirst's show, the Qataris will fund a huge Tate retrospective of Mat Collishaw before firing all their art advisers and purchasing West Bromwich Albion football club instead." I'm making a mental note to go big on Collishaw when Frida Kahlo sweeps by, holding her innards aloft for all to see: "Political art is back! Middle-aged artists sporting handcuffs and a big smile will make heartfelt YouTube videos about political repression which feature legendary ballet dancers seemingly performing sex acts on them!"

"The political is the personal!" yell Jo Spence, Jacques Derrida and an oddly misplaced Francis Bacon. At this war cry, all the ghosts of modernist heroes and heroines nod reverentially before joining hands and spinning upwards into the foggy gloom where the ceiling used to be. "But when you smile at the ground/It ain't hard to tell," they sing down at me. "You don't know/Oh oh/You don't know you're beautiful/Oh, oh/Anish, that's what makes you beautiful!" And with that, I look down and realise I'm handcuffed to Bob and Roberta Smith, wearing a bright pink shirt, snazzy shades and no underwear. Happy New Year!

GG

Milan: interiors of tomorrow



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Milan Fairgrounds, Rho, 09/14.04.2013























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